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Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

Vidyayā vindate amṛtam

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

Since He is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye, therefore the intelligent men, after giving up (self-identification with the senses) and renouncing this world, become immortal.

That which is not uttered by speech, that by which speech is revealed, know that alone to be Brahman, and not what people worship as an object.

It is known to him to whom It is unknown ; he does not know It, to whom It is known. It is unknown to those who know well ; and known to those who do not know.

The Self is really known when It is known with each state of consciousness, because thereby one gets immortality. Strength is acquired because of the presence of the Self within. Immortality is attained through the knowledge of this Self.

If one has realized the Truth here, then there is Truth [or value in his life]: if he has not realized here, then there is great destruction. The wise ones, having realized the Self in all beings, and having turned away from this world, become immortal.

Kena Upaniṣad
(1.2, 1.5, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is an attempt to describe how Sri Ramakrishna is being increasingly accepted, both in the East and in the West, as an incarnation of God.

In RELEVANCE OF YOGA IN TODAY'S LIFE Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission explains lucidly how yoga is essentially different from miracle-mongering and how it can help us gain our mental peace and attain to our inherent divinity.

In SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: MISSIONARY, SAINT OR PROPHET? Dr. Satish K. Kapoor, M.A. (London) Ph. D, explains the three terms, missionary, saint, and prophet and concludes that Swami Vivekananda was primarily a prophet. The author is a Reader, Postgraduate Department of

History, Lyallpur Khalsa College in Jalandhar city.

William of Saint Thierry (1085-1148 A.D.), the most influential mystic and theologian of the Benedictine Order after St. Bernard of Clairvaux is famous for his treatises in which he tries to synthesize the theology and mysticism of Western and Eastern Christianity. The article ABBOT WILLIAM OF SAINT THIERRY by Fr. M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O, of St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts, U.S.A., is a careful study of the spiritual teachings of the great saint.

Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., depicts the life of MANINDRA KRISHNA GUPTA a house holder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.

RAMAKRISHNA : GOD'S RETURN TO MAN

(EDITORIAL)

One of our swamis who had recently visited Russia had a new experience. As he was listening to musicians in an international music festival held in Moscow, an old Russian lady came forward and asked him, 'Are you a swami from India?' When the swami nodded his assent, the lady asked again, 'Are you a swami of Ramakrishna?' With the second assent, her face now glowed with a smile. 'I, too, am a devotee of Ramakrishna. We are one hundred such in our group. We knew him through Romain Rolland's book. We meditate on him. Swami, you are indeed a very holy person, as you belong to Ramakrishna. I am not fit to sit in the same row along with you', she said. Despite all

the persuasions of the swami, the old lady took her seat in a back row. When the festival was over, she again approached the swami in utter reverence, with the words, 'Swami kindly give me through your holy self, the blessings of Ramakrishna.' Deeply moved, the swami remembered his master and raised his hands in benediction. For some moments, she got buried in the living presence of the God of this age.

Like this Russian lady millions in the West came to know of Ramakrishna when his first biography by Max Muller appeared within ten years of Ramakrishna's passing away. With the publication of the second biography of Ramakrishna by the French savant Romain Rolland, Europe first came

to know that another Christ-like personality had indeed appeared in recent times in India. The first world war was just over. Freed from prison where he was confined as an anti-war pacifist, Romain Rolland found a vast mass of ruins, 'a fever-stricken Europe, which has murdered sleep'. The devastating war had shattered man's faith in a providential God. Bernard Shaw said that British people thought of God a British general. Religion lost its hold. Man had lost his grip on the God within. Like many in the West, Rolland was also aware of the infinity of Godhead within. 'But, I had no key', he wrote, 'Neither Shakespeare, nor Beethoven nor Tolstoy, nor Rome' could offer him this key to the lost staircase of the inner kingdom. Finally in Ramakrishna, he found the man who 'more fully than any other men not only conceived, but realized in himself the total Unity of this river of God, open to all rivers and all streams'. Ramakrishna held out to him 'the book of life', 'with every word clear and complete.' Here was the 'blood of immortality', the perennial stream of divinity. 'I have drawn a little of his sacred water to slake the great thirst of the world', he declared. Before a second world war could break out, Rolland hastened to broadcast the message of the new messiah. The *Asia* magazine which first serialized this life in 1929, congratulated 'the distinguished Frenchman of letters' for his biography of Ramakrishna which 'offers a message to the people of the West', a message 'so clear and full in this Hindu saint that it can be passed on for the universal enrichment of man's spirit'.¹ Rolland had finally found 'the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of soul, the symphony of India, which is called Ramakrishna'. 'This

life is', he said, 'a consummation of two thousand years of spiritual life of three hundred million people'. Ramakrishna is 'a splendid symphony of the universal soul'. And like Beethoven's, this new symphony 'is fashioned from a hundred musical elements of past.'² In Ramakrishna, Rolland discovered 'the younger brother of Christ'. But this time it was an 'enriched' version. 'With each return he reveals himself a little more fully, and more enriched by the universe', said Rolland. Ramakrishna offered to the entire world, especially to the West, 'the key to a lost staircase', the staircase that led to the recapturing of the essential divinity which man had lost with his surrender to arms in the first global war. The 'law of spiritual inversion' tells us that God descends on earth so that man may ascend to God. Ramakrishna, like Christ, and Kṛṣṇa came to man so that man could evolve into God. Ramakrishna is, as Rolland discovered, 'our Son, our God reborn'.³ It is God's new return to man.

Despite all the abundance of sensate pleasures, modern life turned into a 'big wastage', a saga of existential suffering, a frantic steeple-chase towards nothing. After Darwin, Marx and Schopenhauer, God was thought to be dead, and religion dying. Ramakrishna suddenly made God real, living! He made religion a power, a dynamo for the psychosocial evolution of man. With him the effulgent light of God entered into the sunless and dark life where man had 'murdered God', and forgotten the divinity of life. Like the boy Kṛṣṇa, he danced with the bliss and power of God on the head of Kālīya, dwarfing the arrogance of the serpent of a sensate

1. Romain Rolland 'Ramakrishna—A Modern Avatar', *Asia* (New York: Asia Publication Inc.,) Vol. XXIX, October, 1929, pp. 761-63.

2. Ibid. p. 833.

3. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) pp. 11-13.

culture born of rank materialism. 'What kind of an incarnation of God is Ramakrishna?', asks a Hindu, 'How many Rāvaṇas and Kamsas did he kill?' He killed no demons, but disproved and destroyed the unquestionable supremacy of materialism which gives birth to godless beings. His gospel removed from the modern mind all doubts and despairs about God and religion. His life showed the utter hollowness of gold and lust which are the two goals of a sensate culture.

Like Christ and Kṛṣṇa, Ramakrishna, too, came in simple guise. At first people could not recognize this unknown minstrel. But when he opened the floodgate of the knowledge and bliss of God, people wondered who this man was. Despite the fulness of knowledge, like a child, Ramakrishna would entreat with tears his Divine Mother not to merge him in the Ultimate Reality, but to make him revel in the bliss of God. In a mystic vision he once saw himself standing alone in a vast field stretching up to horizon, where 'on all sides there was a mist of bliss'. From this bliss emerged another boy, a Paramahansa, and both of them began to play and run in this all-engulfing bliss.⁴ This cosmic bliss flowed spontaneously from his holy life. It scattered like unseen fragrance everywhere.

A widow mother who lost her only princess-like daughter, was condemned to inconsolable grief. Life lost all charm for her. Then one day Ramakrishna entered her dark chamber of bereavement. At once it was lit with joy. The mother, mad with an overwhelming bliss, burst out in an ecstatic outpouring of a resurrected life. 'Ah! Do you not see, I will die, die of this unbearable flood of divine bliss.' Awed

with reverence, she finally fell at his feet who contained all the bliss of life. And hundreds received this bliss. None returned empty handed. The stage actress Vinodini who had lost herself early in life, the drunkard dramatist Girish who alternated between debauchery and devotion, the philosopher M. who was on the verge of putting an end to his life, the intellectual-atheist Narendra who was frantically seeking God, the shepherd boy Rakhturam who used to cry for God, the miracle-monger Girija and Chandra, the orator-leader Keshab, the thoroughly worldly landlord Mathur, the untouchable sweeper Rasik, the ascetic Kṛṣṇa-worshipper Gopala's mother, and hundreds of seekers who came to him, were blessed with this bliss of God. And once they came to Ramakrishna, the centre of life was shifted forever to God.

At the moments of divine ecstasy Ramakrishna's face radiated this unspeakable, divine bliss. One who saw him at these blessed moments wrote: 'No photograph taken of the Paramahansa in samādhi ever succeeded in reproducing the inward glow, the expression of divine ecstasy, Brahmānanda, stamped on the countenance.'⁵ This bliss he radiated everywhere, in houses, temples, congregations, and every street of the great metropolis of Calcutta, wherever he moved. He came to show that without God life is perpetual pain and poverty of the soul. With him it is a perpetual festivity of bliss. Even during his last days when Ramakrishna suffered unbearable physical pain of cancer, this 'inner bliss' flowed like a subterranean current. And he would transmit this bliss to others just by a touch or a word or even a look. His constant refrain was, 'The goal is to love

4. *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Sri Ma's Thakur Bari, 13/2, Guruprasad Chowdhury Lane, B.S. 1388) vol. 4, p. 259.

5. Nagendra Nath Gupta, *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda* (Bombay: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1931) p. 61.

God and taste the Divine Bliss'.⁶ He came to manifest what the ancients had realized long before: 'From bliss, verily, all the beings have sprung. By the same bliss, they live. And in the same bliss they merge at the end.'⁷ Ramakrishna and divine bliss are synonymous. The music of sehnai in the Dakshineswar Kali temple, and the song of the boatmen on the Ganga, used to bring to him the bliss of Brahman. The sight of the lion in the Zoo reminded him of Divine Mother Jagaddhātṛī riding on lion. The sight of the fallen girl in blue sari in the solitary garden of Dakshineswar, reminded him of mother Sītā sitting alone in Rāvaṇa's garden. The sight of a cross-legged European boy in Calcutta fields reminded him of the cross-legged Kṛṣṇa of Vrindaban. During all these moments Ramakrishna would lose himself in samādhi. 'When the body consciousness is gone, when God's presence is felt everywhere, whatever the seer sees, at once elevates him to the bliss of Samadhi', says our scriptures.⁸ Ramakrishna lived this truth every hour in his life.

There was no dearth of eminent scholars in western philosophy, prominent pundits in Indian scriptures, and even leaders of new religious movements in those days. Calcutta, the great metropolis of the British empire in the East, was the favourite hunting ground of all these speakers, orators and religious luminaries. And yet all came to listen to Ramakrishna. Why did they throng to this uneducated Kali-worshipper of Dakshineswar temple? He gave them what others could not. He spoke with authority. The village brahmin's words sounded like words of God, the gospel. His words flowed unhindered like revelations. Simple parables and rustic

similies flickered out like tongues of fire bringing at once clarity and depth in so-called abstruse philosophical questions. And this knowledge was never exhausted as he was never disconnected from the source of all knowledge, his Divine Mother.

By unprecedented renunciation, austerities, and years of life-denying disciplines and spiritual struggles, he obtained the vision of the Divine Mother Kālī. People used to wonder and gather round him when the young priest used to weep disconsolately for the vision of the Divine Mother. The early death of his father and his family poverty had turned him forever from the mutability of life to God. The traditional Hindu faith that gods and goddesses are real, had trickled into the veins of this village boy. Now he was determined to know for himself if God was real. His prayers were not piety, but passionate cries. Finally he decided to kill himself, when all prayers failed. Then one day at the steps of death, Divine Mother revealed Herself to the child. Henceforward She became more real to him than anything else. He talked to Her. He lived with Her. He moved and had his being entirely at Her dictates.

Yet this was not the end, but only the beginning. Mother now inspired her child to walk through all the avenues of worships and religions. The intrepid spiritual athlete now had a successful training in Tantra under an outstanding spiritual woman, in which he was permanently established in the motherhood of God. One after another, he had direct visions of Rāma, Sītā, Hanumān, Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and the child-Rāma known as Rāmlālā. He had even other mystic visions of Maya, Brahman, the world and the various other aspects of the Hindu religion. All these over, Ramakrishna eagerly listened to the Bible for some days. In that Christ-mood he had the vision of Christ. He also practised

6. *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta*, op. cit. vol. 5, p. 83.

7. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 3.6.

8. *Dṛg Dṛśya Viveka*, 14.

Islam in the sufi style, calling the name of Allah, and realized the truth of sufi Islamic sadhana.

But the hound of heaven did not leave the seeker halfway. The tigress of this phenomenal existence, the Divine Mother, led Her child to where both the Mother and son are merged into one. Ramakrishna was heading to the realm of non-dualism. After having visions of gods and goddesses, he was finally tempted to cross the domain of God with form, and enter the world of One Reality of which the gods and goddesses are only different facets. An ascetic called Totapuri led him in this difficult journey. Ramakrishna's constant love to Divine Mother was now the greatest obstacle. The child trembled to leave his Mother behind. But finally he succeeded. The desperate athlete of God finally made it. With the sword of knowledge he cut asunder the veil of Mother by which the Ultimate Reality was obstructed before his final monistic vision. Ramakrishna entered the realm of final transcendence beyond space, time and causation. The salt doll got merged into the sea. The dualism between Mother and son was now gone forever. Brahman and Śakti became one. The transcendent and the immanent became one.

Had Ramakrishna been an ordinary mortal that would be the end. Men who went to enjoy the merriment on the other side of the wall, as Ramakrishna later spoke in his parables, jumped into the fray and failed to return. They could not tell others what joy it was to be there. It was the God in Ramakrishna who returned to tell others what transcendent joy it was on the other side of the relative existence. And this journey from the relative to the Absolute, and again back to the relative, became the natural and daily sport of Ramakrishna. The Divine Mother asked her son to stay on the 'threshold of relative

existence'. Like a mad man he continually went down to the ocean of immortality and brought its sacred water to those who were thirsting for God. That became his vocation. Days and nights, months and years, Ramakrishna did this with a divine passion for suffering humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. 'He verily becomes the emperor of all', says the Upaniṣad, 'in all the worlds he moves freely with the boundless bliss of God.'⁹ Ramakrishna, the emperor in the realm of spirituality, made a bridge between the world of men (*jīvaloka*), and the world of God (*śivaloka*), his dear ones used to say.

Religions had become circumscribed by rituals, blind obedience to holy texts, and exclusivistic claims. In Bengal the Sakti-worshippers would not touch the *tulsi* leaves meant for the worship of Viṣṇu. The Vaiṣṇavites could not even stand the name of Kāī. In South India the fight between the *teṅgalais* and *vaḍagalais* regarding the Vaiṣṇavite markings on the forehead of the ceremonial elephant, reached privy council in London. Followers of Semitic religions were and still are killing millions in the name of their own god. Religions separated man from man, and thus man from God. Casteism, untouchability and fundamentalism brought untold atrocities in the name of religions. 'Religions of the world have become life-less mockeries', said Vivekananda. Ramakrishna breathed life into it. He united man with God, and thus united man with man, removing all distinctions of caste, creed and religion, in a tempestuous tide of divine love to one and all.

Books were dry pages with the theories printed on them. Ramakrishna's life brought credibility to books. He brought the shower of divine bliss in the arid desert of lectures, and sectarianism. Here was a

9. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.25.2.

man who showed what character is, what renunciation is, what purity is, what catholicity is. While some religious leaders were trying to make a comfortable union of worldliness and renunciation, Ramakrishna's renunciation was complete. Worldliness to him was enjoyment of woman and gold. Ramakrishna rejected both to an incredible extent, beyond ordinary human thinking.

* * *

When the flower blossoms bees come of themselves. Now people began to throng round him, and sometimes in multitude. Here was a strange man whose vast spiritual experiences in all their depths and expansiveness stunned even the most advanced spiritual souls in those days. Before his direct realization of countless gods and goddesses of Hinduism, the Christ and Mother Mary of Christians, the Allah of sufi Islam, the formless One of the Upanishads, the Immanent One of the Vedas, even scriptures paled into insignificance. The blinding radiance of his life virtually awed and overpowered the pundits, scholars, and intellectuals. Keshab Chandra Sen, the eminent Brahmo leader, openly declared that in the Samādhi-face of Ramakrishna, he had seen the transcendence of Christ and Caitanya. Padmolochan, the renowned Hindu theologian and the court pundit of Burdwan, was overwhelmed when he first met Ramakrishna, and said, 'The holy dust of your feet can turn score of fools into pundits like me. The concept of incarnation is a trifling one. You are the One who creates incarnations of God. Well, if anyone challenges my statement I am prepared to defend it on the strength of holy texts. Your experiences have gone far beyond those recorded in the Vedas and Purāṇas.'¹⁰ Vivekananda, the most

brilliant and rational among his dearest disciples, turned to scriptures in order to understand his master's life 'whose brightness would without them have dazzled him', wrote Nivedita, 'and left him incapable of analysing it.'¹¹ Vivekananda wrote: 'His life alone made me understand what the Sastras really meant, and the whole plan and scope of the old Sastras.' Eminent pundits of Bengal in fact, had already met in Dakshineswar in an open meeting and had concluded from the authority of the scriptures that it was the Incarnation-Power of God that was working through the simple human body of Ramakrishna. Yet with Ramakrishna, the eternal child, the ego had been totally obliterated. 'He was not humble, but he seemed to have forgotten that Ramakrishna had ever been.'¹² 'I' and 'mine' were unknown to Ramakrishna. 'Whatever exists is the Divine Mother', he used to say. 'He was contented to live the great life', wrote Vivekananda, 'and to leave it to others to explain'.¹³

A brimming river cannot contain itself. Nearly twelve years ago Ramakrishna had left the metropolis of Calcutta, totally rejecting its values, and had withdrawn himself into the secluded forest-garden of Dakshineswar temple, in order to realize God. Today he made a triumphant return with God, in the fullness of love. The spiritual radiance of Amitabha Buddha now combined with an all-embracing compassion of Avalokiteśvara Buddha, who turns every movement in hundred directions, in order to respond to the least cry of human suffering. Ramakrishna returned not to preach, but to love those

Sri Ramakrishna', *Prabuddha Bharata* (Calcutta: 1980) vol. 85, p. 338.

11. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1972) p. 159.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 490.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

10. Swami Prabhananda 'First Meetings with

whom, like Jonathan Seagull, he had once left behind. He returned not merely to scholars or temples or holy men, but more to the masses, to common men and women who were crying for God's grace.

* * *

Vivekananda found in his Master 'a new God' and 'a new religion'. With a prophetic vision he asked modern man to turn from the worship of the 'dead past' to that of Ramakrishna, the 'living present'. 'He is', Vivekananda understood 'the reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion'.¹⁴

Western religions of Judeo-Christian origin, as historian Toynbee pointed out, began on 'the west bank of the river Jordan'.¹⁵ The Jewish God Yahweh, the Islamic God Allah, and the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrianism, or the Father in heaven in New Testament 'came to be thought of as being fatherly, loving, righteous, but he was still held to be omnipotent.' He punishes evil-doers. He is kind to his followers and sometimes promises heavens full of wine and sense-pleasures. But a question, says Toynbee, was never properly answered. If the Almighty father is all-compassionate, and omnipotent, how is it that He creates so much of evil and suffering?¹⁶ India knew the answer ages before. And Ramakrishna gave the answer by his realization of God as Divine Mother. 'The Divine Mother has become everything'. She is in evil. She is in good. She is life. She is death. It is all her play. 'She is the gallows. She is the executioner. She is the victim', Ramakrishna used to say. Our

karma leads us to bliss or suffering. Mother can untie that knot of karma, if one turns to Mother. And even that turning to Mother depends on Her will. The way to receive Her grace is total surrender to the Divine will. Puruṣa is the pure consciousness. Prakṛti or Mother is the dynamic aspect of that Absolute consciousness, like the serpent and its undulating movement. Her will may mean both death and immortality. She is Kālī, the all-destroyer and all-preserver. One must face death in order to reach out to Her.

For the semitic religions there is no reincarnation. Death is the finale of life. And doom's day is the ultimate destiny of humanity, after which the great judgement by the ruling Almighty, will award either a *paradiso* or an *inferno* to the believers. The philosophy of existentialism, more developed after the first world war, made death not only the finalé, but the only way of escape from 'suffering', which, in the sophoclean way, is embedded in the very existence of life. 'Today', says Toynbee 'westerners find the prospect of annihilation unbearable'.¹⁷ 'The West', he believes, 'have been less clear-sighted and less-courageous-minded than the Hindus. It is better to face the truth about the universe'.¹⁸

Ramakrishna realized this whole truth of life in both its earthly sufferings and its divine bliss. Despite his constant absorption in God, Ramakrishna was intensely human, and more sensitive to human suffering than the most sensitive amongst us. When a boatman slapped his brother on a boat in Ganga, Ramakrishna, standing far away on the steps, cried out in agonizing pain. Those slappings were stamped on his back. When his beloved nephew Akshay died Ramakrishna writhed in an agony of inconsolable grief. The absence of his

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978) vol. 6, p. 186.

15. Arnold Toynbee, 'What does the West have to Learn from the East?', *PHP* (Japan: PHP Institute International Inc.) August 1974, p. 4.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

beloved boy Narendra made him weep for days together. But the next moment, at an altered state of consciousness, he would realize that it is all due to the will of his Divine Mother. In Her curse there is the opening to a higher bliss. And both bliss and peace would soon return to Ramakrishna. The fullness of faith and completeness of spiritual vision realized in God as Mother, mark Ramakrishna as a path-finder for those who worship God only as a father, a ruler, a justice-giver, or only as a symbol of all good.

That all paths lead to one God is not a new concept to the Hindus, although it is unknown to semitic religions. Kṛṣṇa speaks of this idea in the Gita. But Ramakrishna demonstrated this by his life, stepping far beyond the boundaries of the Hindu faith. He had the vision of Christ as a child on the lap of Mother Mary, and this vision appealed more to Ramakrishna who himself was a child of Mother. Ramakrishna experienced and realized God in all its aspects, God as mother, as friend, as lover, as father, as child, and finally, again, as Mother. The Motherhood of God became his crowning achievement. Muhammad Daud Ruhbar wrote that Ramakrishna 'should be remembered as the Son of Woman' as Jesus 'is remembered as the Son of Man.'¹⁹ Nivedita, the western disciple of Vivekananda, wrote, 'the soul that becomes a child finds God oftenest as Mother.'²⁰ Ramakrishna's life demonstrated religion as one of love for God, especially, God as Mother, who is nearer than the nearest to us. His was not a religion of submission to and fear of a ruling God, the Almighty, the punisher, or protector. His was not a religion meant

for proselytization or crusade. His was the religion of a total surrender to God and an universal love spanning continents and uniting religions.

Physicist Fritjof Capra has shown that civilization today has made a shift to a new paradigm, a new set of values and thinkings. The male principle of reason, domination and power symbolized by *yan* is giving way, both in science and society, to the female principle *yin* of mutual understanding, cooperation, harmony, complementarity of opposite thoughts and universal love to all, irrespective of caste and creed.²¹ Ramakrishna, the greatest champion of the Motherhood of God, stands as the beginner and the epitome of this new paradigm. Did Ramakrishna's Mother-worship have any impact on the world? Probably it is too early to predict. But indications are clear. Thirty thousand Christian nuns and monks have appealed to Pope for a rewriting of the Bible. Who said God is father? Who can deny that God is Mother? Let there be 'our Mother and Father in heaven' where it was only 'our Father in heaven'. The pressure is mounting.²²

Materialism taught us to respect 'gold' or economic prosperity as the end of life. Ramakrishna realized that religion is not possible for empty stomachs. But he also realized that bread is not the end, but the means to something higher in life—the divinity within. He renounced gold. And this renunciation was so complete that even an inadvertent touch of coin sent him to convulsions of pain. When somebody offered him money, he fainted. What more does a man need when he is perpetually protected by the Queen of the universe?

19. *World Thinkers on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1983) p. 13.

20. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit. vol. 1, p. 465.

21. *The Schumacher Lectures*, Ed. Satish Kumar, (London: Sphere Books Ltd. 1982) Abacus Edn., pp. 130-135.

22. *Time* (New York) 24, October 1983. p. 40.

Would it not be a betrayal to depend upon man?

The renunciation of Ramakrishna is not exhausted here. The vision of Divine Mother Ramakrishna had experienced in the temple of Kali. As time went on, Ramakrishna began to see the visible manifestation of the same Divine Mother in all women, even in the fallen ones. With Ramakrishna a dichotomy between thought and action was unknown. The intensity of this realization now drove him to practise it in his own personal life. Finally on an auspicious night he literally worshipped his own young wife Sarada Devi as Divine Mother. Christ did not marry. Buddha and Caitanya left their wives. Ramakrishna's absolute renunciation of sensate pleasures ended in deification of his own wife with whom he lived all through like a child, in unbroken purity. He demonstrated what the *Iśa Upaniṣad* taught us—the deification of life, by renunciation of lust and greed. Ramakrishna's renunciation is superhuman. His holiness is unparalleled. History has no such precedence. Vivekananda wrote, 'It took me six years to understand that he was not holy, because he had become holiness itself'.²³

Ramakrishna's another disciple, Swami Saradananda, said that after his historic realization of Mother in all women, Ramakrishna was transformed into a child, and his body-consciousness was gone forever. And with the loss of body consciousness, Ramakrishna was permanently elevated to *Divya-bhāva*, a state of Divine consciousness.²⁴ He saw God everywhere. God as Mother led him to the highest monistic vision attainable to any human

being. He used to say that in this age one will attain to the divinity in life earlier by worshipping God as Mother. The name of Mother drives away at once Maya, the enchantress, the veiling and deluding power of ignorance.

We have seen how Ramakrishna in his Advaita sadhana had realized that the transcendent and the immanent are one. Thenceforward he rejected nothing as 'unreal', but accepted everything as manifestation of God. One must take the bel fruit, he used to say, in its wholeness with its kernel, its seeds, and even its outer shell. As this vision deepened, the distinction between work and worship, between the sacred and the secular, between the sentient and insentient fell off. Religions, today, are killing human beings like beasts of prey. Ramakrishna saw the living in the non-living. In the broken stone image of Kṛṣṇa in Dakshineswar temple, Ramakrishna saw the 'living God'. He refused to banish it and made it 'whole' by his life-giving touch. He used to speak, in his usual humour, of the three divine figures in Vaisnava scriptures—'Advaita, Caitanya, Nityānanda'.²⁵ When man sees one (Advaita) everywhere, his higher consciousness (Caitanya) is awakened. Life then becomes a place of perpetual bliss (Nityānanda). He vehemently chided the Vaisnava *bābājīs* when they spoke to him of 'compassion to living beings'. 'Compassion?' protested Ramakrishna. 'Who can show compassion to God in flesh and blood? Nay, not compassion, but worship of God in man.' His life itself stood out as demonstration of this living truth. He refused to reject the fallen actresses, the untouchable sweeper, and the drunkard despots. He gave them his blessings and spoke to them the kindest words, and

23. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit. vol. 1, p. 485.

24. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, translated into English by Swami Jagadananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978) p. 233.

25. *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta*, op. cit., Vol. 5, p. 94.

cared for them even when he lay on death bed. Ramakrishna thus turned religion into service. The uplift of the common masses became a spiritual pursuit. Spiritual transcendence finally led to spiritual dynamism—the practical Vedanta, which is Ramakrishna's unique gift to humanity.

* * *

In a vision Ramakrishna once saw himself sitting alone on a mountain on skulls.²⁶ Did he see himself as the life-giver to the dead bones of our civilization, where 'hollow men' with their 'headpiece filled with straw' had embraced a death of the soul in lieu of a few fishes and loaves? Did he see himself as the saviour of a world where war-mongers were getting ready to leave behind only mountains of skulls? Today we stand with sufficient thermonuclear weapons by which we can bring the total devastations of 'World War Two *once a second* for the length of a lazy afternoon', as Carl Sagan put it.²⁷ We are ready for it. The craziest among us can trigger it any moment with the callous stupidity of Schopenhauer's 'blind will'. The superindustrial civilization today has brought machines and comforts. But peace has receded from modern men, and 'they are paying for this a higher price than ever in terms of psychological stress and strain'.²⁸ The need today is not more riches or the creation of another sectarian dogma. We have enough of lethal weapons along with mutually conflicting dogmas whose followers are busy in conducting colossal genocide in the name of religion. The

exigency of the hour is the restoration of 'normal human faculty of spiritual contemplation'. Ramakrishna's message puts an end to dogmatism, and brings us back to spiritual exploration for God within and without.

On that memorable day, 1 January 1886, when seekers of God approached him for grace, he only said, 'Let your higher consciousness be awakened.' The words fraught with a super human potency, made the blessed souls feel that their innate divinity had truly been awakened lifting them up forever from their biological levels to a divine life. Ramakrishna asked none to worship this god, follow that prophet, or respect that book. His message was to manifest the true manhood, the divinity in man, whatever be the path suited to the taste of the individual.

With infinite sacrifice he paved for us the way of survival and the way to perfection. Two sign posts signify this way: One is the unity of all creeds and religions, and the other is the essential divinity of life in a holistic universe. Toynbee, one of the international saints of this century, realized that Ramakrishna's way is the way of human survival today. Shall we listen to Ramakrishna, or surrender to our indifference to the God who returned to save us, and thus embrace total extinction? Only a 'higher sanity' can save us, and this is what is slowly emerging among the younger generation of the West, as Theodore Roszak discovers in his study of western man.

Nancy Louis Moore, a young and affluent girl, was burning herself in broad daylight right in front of a petrol pump in Los Angeles. As the flames of petrol began to envelop her, people saw with wonder that Nancy held out during these last moments a picture of Ramakrishna. She died quietly with her eyes fixed on the saviour. Probably Ramakrishna came too

26. *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta*, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 56.

27. Quoted in Arthur C. Clarke, *Star Wars and Star Peace* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986) p. 2.

28. Arnold J. Toynbee, 'Paying the Price of an Industrial Revolution', *PHP*, op. cit., November 1974, p. 59.

late in her life, but Nancy's death-defying gaze proved she recognized the saviour.²⁹ This hunger for Ramakrishna is now increasing both in East and West.

Today Ramakrishna is slowly emerging as the symbol of all religions—*sarvadharmasvarūpa*. Hindus see in him the embodiment of all gods and goddesses—*sarvadevadevī-svarūpa*. Sufi mystics see in him a true mystic. Christians find in him the rebirth of a Christ. The world slowly sees in him, the 'God of All'.³⁰

Vivekananda who understood him most, hardly preached him as an incarnation of God when he first began to preach Ramakrishna's message both in the East and the West. To this beloved disciple, Ramakrishna made his final self-revelation—'He who came as Rāma, He who came as Kṛṣṇa, has come this time as Ramakrishna.' Yet Vivekananda knew full well in the end of the nineteenth century, that time was not yet ripe for men to see God's return in Ramakrishna. To his erstwhile intellectual and atheist disciple, Vivekananda wrote: 'God, though everywhere, can be known to us in and through human character. No character was so perfect as Ramakrishna, and that should be the centre round which we ought to rally: at the same time allowing everybody to regard him in his own light, either as God, saviour, teacher, model, or a great man, just as he pleases.'³¹ To Ramakrishna's own disciples, he wrote: 'spread only what he came to teach. Never mind his name—it will spread of itself'.³²

That was during the last decade of the

19th century. Today Ramakrishna is a 'living presence'. His name inspires new life in dead souls. The 'spiritual impact' of his movement is emerging with a power to guide humanity, as Vivekananda saw it, 'for at least fifteen hundred years'. Like 'tidal waves' his ideas are rolling today both in the East and the West.

Recently in 120 Yoga Vedanta Centres in Basque and other places in Spain, more than seven thousand young men and women are literally worshipping the picture of Ramakrishna.³³ Buddha's and Christ's pictures are imaginary. Islam does not allow any picture of its Messiah. Ramakrishna's is the only historical photograph of a God-Man. A swami of the Order was invited to teach them the formal worship. Many more are waiting in vain for an evangel of Ramakrishna. A western swami of the Ramakrishna Order said recently, 'the increase in interest in Hinduism in Holland and Belgium is dramatic. In fact, we cannot hope to minister to such a huge flock.'³⁴ Western Vedantists, and even Russian intellectuals are eagerly waiting for the Ramakrishna Order to send swamis to their countries.

During his life-time Ramakrishna one day worshipped his own photograph and made the prophetic self-revelation, 'In times to come this photo will be worshipped in every household'. That time has come.

Today Ramakrishna is everywhere, in the grocer's shops as well as in the chambers of kings and philosophers. In the stark simplicity of his half-naked dress he seems to laugh at our affluence and amenities, our stock-piles of thermo-nuclear weapons. He smiles in the

29. Shankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekānanda O Samakālīn Bhāratvarṣa* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Mandal Book House, B.S. 1383) vol. 2, p. 252.

30. Claude Allan Starke, *God of All* (Mass.: Claude Starke Inc., 1974).

31. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) p. 68.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

33. 'Hindu Europe', *The Week* (Kottayam: A Malayalam Manorama Publication) January 1986, p. 21.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

bliss of God. There is an unmistakable touch of Sītā's pathos in his radiant smile, a touch of Christ's and Buddha's compassion for the accumulated sufferings of men. With infinite love he seems to speak to us, 'He that followeth me shall not walketh in darkness, but shall have the light of life.... I am the truth, the way to the everlasting life.' Ramakrishna seems to remind us of God's new return to man.

RELEVANCE OF YOGA IN TODAY'S LIFE

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

I feel great pleasure to be in your midst in this Ashrama. The subject for talk this evening is, relevance of yoga in today's life. By today's life I mean the modern way of living where we have made some advance so far as the acquisition of the various amenities of life is concerned. But then along with these amenities, there have also come various troubles with which we have been afflicted in our everyday life. It is not that we alone are facing these problems in India. The trouble is everywhere. In the affluent countries they have enough money, and sufficient amenities in life, but even then they are not happy. Most of us do not know how to get rid of this unhappiness born of affluence. Perhaps there is no possibility of having a society where there will be no difficulties, no conflicts, no troubles of any kind. Whether in the East or in the West, the condition of human life is more or less the same, though there may be different forms and different appearances of the joys and sufferings of life. One thing that is common everywhere, is that we are unhappy. This unhappiness is due mainly to our not being able to find a direction towards which we should make progress. We are talking of backward countries, advanced countries, rich countries, poor countries, but everywhere one common factor is always present. It is this all-pervading unhappiness, and if we go to the root of this unhappiness we will find that

our life is without a purpose. In the West people, particularly the younger generation, are extremely bewildered because they do not know what should be the purpose of life. In the absence of such a definite purpose, there are many in the West particularly the younger people, who are turning hippies. They are outcasts of the society. They cannot accommodate themselves in the society. Nor the society can find the means to make them integrated into it. They have become outcasts. They have gone out of the fold of society. They have refused to believe in the norms that are usually believed in. This is the unfortunate state of things both in the West and in the East.

In India many of us, we know, are below the poverty line, without having sufficient amenities of life. Many of us lack even the minimum requirements. We do not have enough to eat, we do not have enough to wear. We do not have enough accommodation in dwelling places. This is the primary need for everyone. Those who are comparatively affluent are found to be without any belief in ancient moral values and ancient philosophical roots in which their life can be stable and move firmly. Now that is the condition more or less everywhere in one form or other. We are suffering from the absence of a spiritual

* Talk delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission, Raipur, M.P., on 1 December 1985.

direction in life. What should be the aim that we are striving to attain? What is our goal that we are to advance towards? When the goal is lost sight of, then turning backward or forward, being advanced or being backward, has no meaning. Advancement towards what? We do not know. Where are we going? What should be actual object that we want to attain in life? This is the unfortunate condition that we are passing through.

The subject that is to be the theme of today's talk is Yoga. Yoga is absolutely necessary for fixing our mind towards a goal. What is Yoga? We do not find any unanimity in its meaning. Very often we think by Yoga the tricks that are performed by jugglers. That is what we mean by Yoga nowadays. We hear, there is a great yogi who is going to remain buried under ground for one month. That is what is called Yoga. Similarly there are various other things which pass in the name of Yoga. There are tricksters who are considered to be yogis. Their performance is supposed to be yogic because of the supernatural powers they have gained by some means. This is no doubt a part of the Yoga, which says that by concentration of mind on various things and other kinds of disciplines such supernatural powers can, indeed, be attained. But acquiring supernatural power is not Yoga. Unfortunately, that is how the word Yoga has been very often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Anybody becomes a yogi if he can show something unusual which others cannot achieve. But the Yoga-sutra of Patañjali, or the Gita which are the sources of our yogic knowledge, never mention that sort of trickery as the goal of Yoga. The Yoga, in the true sense, means that sort of tranquillity of mind which will free us from the inner and outer tensions that we are suffering from constantly, everywhere. And this inner tension is increased all the more where

there is more of wealth. Yoga means to acquire for us a mind which will be balanced, which will be in equilibrium, which will not be disturbed by the passing phases of life or the changing environment around us. That is the state of mind which will be most suitable for the highest enlightenment in life. That is what is called Yoga. There are different kinds of Yoga, such as Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga and the Yoga of Patañjali which is considered to be the royal or Rāja Yoga. Also there is another phase of Yoga known as Karma Yoga. These Yogas are all meant for making a man draw out his inner essence of divinity. That is meant by the word Yoga. The means provided by Yoga is the systematic method of realizing our essential divinity which has been described by various sages, and in various scriptures. But the result will be one and the same—transcending our lower self and reaching the divinity within. We must have to raise ourselves above the animality, the state of animals. We have no control over our mind. We have no control over our passions. We have no control over the actions that we perform, and in this manner we are constantly dissipating our energy and perhaps we are just bringing us near to failures and frustrations. You know for certain that moral values have gone down very low. Even spiritual values, in general, are also at a low ebb. We all know it. But we do not understand or can not think precisely as to how we can get rid of this state and rise above this degrading condition so that we shall be in a better position to express the divinity that is within us. We are, in India, believers in the essential divinity of man. But that belief has become only a sort of dogma, only an article of faith. We never tried seriously to apply this ideal to life itself. Now, that is the reason why in spite of such high-sounding words that we utter, we are also at a great depth of degradation. Everywhere

this is the condition. Here, in our country, it is extremely painful to see that the land of the sages and saints has gone down to such an extent that our younger generation has almost lost faith in the heritage of our country. We feel that we are very much degraded because we cannot cope with the progress made by the western people technically, scientifically and economically. We think, our poverty is a sin. And that sort of self-degradation, that sort of a loss of esteem for our own heritage, is a ruinous factor for us. We are being ruined for this sort of self-condemnation. In this country particularly, poverty was never considered to be a crime. But today, because of the impact of western society and their way of life, we also have begun to feel in the same way. We also are thinking today that because we are scientifically backward, we are in a state of poverty. It is true that poverty should not be allowed to degrade our life. In our country the poorest section of the people are at the lowest rung of the ladder in society. But we have forgotten that poverty and irreligion or immorality do not go together. We are looking here and there only to improve our conditions economically by borrowing technology and other things from outside. Of course, whatever is necessary for raising the condition of the poor must be provided. But then, poverty itself should not be considered a crime. Even if we can transplant ourselves in the culture of the West and imbibe it, should we be happy? Is not unhappiness also rampant there?

So, we have to look back and find out what was considered by our *ṛṣis* to be the safety of the entire humanity. And that safety is in maintaining a sort of equilibrium in our mental and spiritual horizon. This equilibrium we have lost today. But there are means for regaining the same. And these means are available in the teachings of the saints and sages, in our scriptures.

It is here that the word Yoga becomes relevant. Rāja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga or Karma Yoga, any one or more of these various yogas can raise us from a state of internal and external sufferings to a better understanding of our future and better understanding of our goal. But we have not applied them to the daily life of our individuals. We speak of them, but it becomes simply a sort of hypocrisy, when we speak of things which we do not practise in our everyday life. This Yoga, therefore, has to be applied to the everyday life of our country, as also of the whole world. If this practice is continued seriously, the Yoga is bound to raise us, from where we are, to a higher state of existence, where there will not be so much strife, so much conflict, and so much miseries in various ways. That is what has to be understood.

The word Yoga, as we understand according to the sage Patañjali, the interpreter of Yoga, is what is called 'control of the mind'. It is the mind that makes us happy or unhappy because the mind is uncontrolled. Therefore, it leads to various kinds of miseries. Happiness, particularly abiding happiness, is possible only for a person who has controlled his mind so that the mind may not be scattered anywhere and everywhere. In the Upaniṣads it is said that the higher reason or intellect should be the restraining factor. Our human life is compared to a journey in a chariot. The higher reason in us is the charioteer who is seated in the chariot which is drawn by horses. The horses are compared to the sense organs. They are dragging this chariot of the body. These unbridled horses are to be controlled. Mind has been stated as the reins that hold the horses in the right direction, and the direction is given by *buddhi* or higher reason, the charioteer. It is the charioteer who gives a direction to the horses to pull the chariot in the right direction. If the horses are not controlled,

if the senses are not controlled by the discriminating factor *buddhi*, then naturally we shall be ruined. We do not know where the horses, the senses, will take us. It is only under the constraint of the mind which is directed by *buddhi*, that we can proceed towards the desired goal. That is clearly stated in our scriptures as the way to achieve success in life. Our success does not mean attaining a temporary objective. Because that temporary objective may not take us towards the ideal goal. Temporary objective may be anything. But the ultimate goal has to be kept in mind. Without our keeping constant watch as to whether we are losing sight of the ideal, the goal, we may be only distracted and led astray. That has to be clearly understood. And Yoga is an integral factor in directing our energy towards the final goal of realizing our divinity by gaining complete control over the senses. Yoga is the director to this final goal. It is here that Yoga has got relevance to our life, not only now, but everywhere, at all times. It is particularly relevant today when we are without any guidance, without any purpose in life, towards which we are to proceed consciously. That is why we find so much of conflict and misery. We are doing harm to ourselves because of our indifference towards this final objective in life.

What is our real nature? Our real nature, according to the scriptures, is perfect peace, harmony and knowledge. That is the ultimate objective. But we have lost sight of that and are only running about hither and thither and saying all the time that 'we are unhappy, we are unhappy'. Everywhere people repeat this refrain of modern life—'we are unhappy'. Even people who are supposed to have maximum amenities of life which should make one happy, say, 'we too are unhappy'. People come to us seeking happiness. How can we give them happiness when their life is not controlled?

If we ask them to control their minds they will laugh at us and say, 'Oh, if that is the panacea, then we are not going to have it'. They never tried to control their minds nor they had ever heard that such a thing was necessary. From our childhood we are used to hearing, 'you must acquire education, you must also learn science and technology, so that you can stand the keen competitions of today.' They are giving us ideas for making ourselves stronger than others, so that we may not be left behind, and dominated by others. But that is the way of competition only. And this competition is the mother of all sorts of conflict and misery. That is all that we are told today. But we do not have the patience of mind to practise what our sages have said about this kind of conflicts and their remedies. Great sages had enough knowledge to understand the intricate workings of the mind. Mind is constantly throwing up ideas which always distract us. We do not know how to check this flow of thoughts and desires constantly storming our minds, thus making us unhappy and unbalanced in all spheres of life. We do not know how to have a little calmer state of mind. We know that we are disturbed and that we are in conflict. We know that we are suffering from hypertension, as we often say. People are always trying to resort to some temporary means without going to the root of the problem. They do not follow the procedure which can undoubtedly free them from this kind of hypertension and conflict, free them from this tension of keen competition or rather brutal competition, in modern life. The theory of evolution, according to modern thinking, is based on the basic idea of this competition. Everywhere the slogan is, 'survival of the fittest'. And fittest means the strongest, the trickiest, and the most ruthless group of people who can dominate over others, and even survive by eliminating others. That is

the way in which we are being trained. But we know that this will not bring good to anybody, because this conflict will go on endlessly. Today we are dominating others. Tomorrow the table will turn and they will dominate over us. In this way, history consists of the rise and fall of great empires, great people who have tried to dominate over others. Ultimately these very people were dominated by those who had been under their thumbs. That is how the so-called 'struggle for existence' is going on. But that can never bring us lasting peace, and much less the individual peace which is the goal of every individual. We are trying to be happy, we are trying to be free from this kind of conflict, but then, we do not know how to solve this conflict. There are sages and saints who are talking to us from behind, 'My children, you are going in a wrong direction. First of all, you will have to control your passions, control your mind, and then only peace will come. Peace never comes by controlling others'. That is the way that we have to go, and Yoga will be a very important factor, an essential item in our life which will lead us to mental peace, and freedom from conflicts.

At the very outset, Yoga asks us to control our mind—*citta vrtti nirodha*. It means the quietening of the mind which is throwing up constantly wave after wave of thoughts, of desires, the *vrttis*. They are constantly rising from below the mind, from the depth, as it were, and we are helpless to check this flow of ideas which are distracting us. Now that has to be controlled in a methodical manner. No haphazard method will do it. We have to be wholehearted in that process. No trickery can be helpful in this manner. Yoga does not mean any kind of trickery, any kind of material achievement or gaining superiority over others by some tricks. What is necessary is a control over our passions, over our mind, over our

thought process, which alone can save us from this kind of distraction, this kind of misery. That is the aim the Yoga has for taking us out of this miserable existence of today. Mind has to be trained, and trained in a methodical manner, and that methodical manner will require our being established in absolute purity.

Purity and truthfulness are essentials for a Yogi. There are eight-fold paths of Yoga—Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi. That is so clearly stated that there cannot and should not be any kind of confusion, in the minds of the people. First of all, we must have control over our senses. We must have absolute purity and truthfulness. These are the absolutely necessary grounds on which the foundation of Yoga is built. This foundation can never be built by any kind of trickery, or breath control, or simply by some physical exercise. They can produce some results, but those results are not worth attaining. Because when the mind remains impure even if we have got certain supernatural powers, the powers will be only abused and finally spell ruin for us. Those powers are very difficult to control. A man with such powers is a dangerous man, not a Yogi. All these powers attained through trickery or physical control or even mental control, are not going to take us to any higher state of existence. They are not going to free us from the misery that we are suffering from. On the other hand, they will only make us worse than we are now. Sri Ramakrishna says that any kind of supernatural power is not a help, but a hindrance towards God realization. What is necessary is complete control over the senses and the mind, and a proper direction given to our life's journey towards the final goal, by the discriminating *buddhi*. That is what is absolutely necessary. So, Yoga does not mean any kind of physical control, or

physical exercise, nor even a mental exercise. That is why we have to clearly understand what is the purpose set before a Yogi. A Yogi must be one who has complete control over himself, and who has only good wishes for everybody and harms none. The preparatory steps like Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyama, Pratyāhāra are absolutely necessary in order to reach that highest state of consciousness, or Samādhi which is not merely stopping the mental processes for sometime, but which manifests the divine man within us for ever. That is what is the aim of Yoga and that has to be constantly remembered. Without that aim, if we try to practise Yoga we shall do more harm than good to ourselves and to society. We find individuals demonstrating the Āsanas in the streets, making people wonder. What has he achieved thereby? Has he become a better man? Has his mind become purer? Has he developed thereby sympathy for the whole world? Has he attained peace thereby? No. It is merely a sort of profession for earning money by duping people. We must realize that this is not Yoga. Yoga never meant that sort of trickery, performed in the streets for just earning money. Sri Ramakrishna once told a story about the acquiring of supernatural powers. There were two brothers. One brother left the house and went for spiritual practice. After twelve years he returned home and said, 'You see, I have achieved great powers'. Then the younger brother said, 'Yes brother, can you show what you have achieved?' 'Yes, come with me,' said the elder brother. Saying this, he went to a river, and then just walked over the water straight to the other side. Reaching the other side he saw the younger brother sailing by a boat to the same bank he had reached. The younger brother asked the elder brother, 'What have you achieved brother?' 'Did you not see, I crossed the river by walking over water?' answered the elder. The younger brother

then replied, 'Yes brother, I too crossed the same river by a boat and I had to pay only one pice for this trip. So what you have attained by your practice during these twelve years, is worth a pice.' These are the subtle truths we do not often understand. Gaining supernatural power is never the ambition of a Yogi. A Yogi wants to solve the problems of his life by making intense spiritual effort to become truthful, pure, compassionate, and thus attain the highest peace and bliss. He sets, before us an example so that by following his footsteps we also can solve our problems by raising ourselves from the level of the brutes to the status of the divine. This divinity within ourselves has to be given expression. And Yoga is the system which has given clearly intelligible means by which we can reach that state of complete divinity. That is the ambition of a Yogi. We should remember that, and evaluate all Yogis from that point of view. Has the Yogi achieved something by means of which he has got mastery over his senses? Has he been able to control the vagaries of his mind? Has he been filled with eternal peace undisturbed by any change in circumstances? Has he been a blessing to the world? These are the questions that have to be asked, and then only we know who a Yogi is. I would not go into details about it, because Yoga is a system that is meant not only for understanding, but more for practice. It requires a lifelong attempt to continue in such practices in order to reap the true benefit of Yoga. The so-called supernatural powers lead us nowhere.

I have given you just a summary of what Yoga should be and what it should not be. I hope, this will give you some idea. I know, you are attending to a series of lectures on Yoga. So I do not feel it necessary to go into further details. With these few remarks I take your leave.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : MISSIONARY, SAINT OR PROPHET ?

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

'I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East', said Swami Vivekananda.¹ Did he know that he was a second Buddha ? Was the statement born of a prophetic vision or simple reason ? Did it reflect only the sentimentality of an orator, or the deep anguish of a reformer ? All this leads one to ask : Was Swami Vivekananda a missionary, saint, or a prophet ?

A missionary is one who attempts to persuade or convert others to his position or principles in the land of his birth or outside². Swami Vivekananda was not a missionary of the class in which we place William Carey³ or Alexander Duff⁴. He remarked on many occasions that he did not go to the West to preach Hinduism. 'I was never a missionary nor ever would

be one—my place is in the Himalayas'⁵. He also said, 'I do not come to convert you to a new belief. I want to make the methodist a better methodist; the presbyterian, a better presbyterian; the unitarian a better unitarian. I want to teach you to live the truth, to reveal the light within your own soul.' Many American newspapers confirmed the truth of such utterances of the Swami. The correspondent of the *Appeal Avalanche*, for example, after interviewing him, remarked : 'He is here not to propagate the doctrines of any religion of India, and make converts to the same...' *Detroit Free Press* reported that 'the Indian exponent of divine doctrines made many converts in the Windy city'. At the same time the same journal noted 'an entire lack of the missionary spirit in the distinguished visitor.' To the interviewer, the Swami himself remarked that the Hindus never sought to thrust their religious views on others. He emphasized in most of his lectures in America and England that he was not on a proselytizing mission. 'They were Christian; it was well. He was a Hindu; that also was well. In his country different creeds were formulated for the needs of people of different grades of intelligence, all this marking the progress of spiritual evolution.' He ridiculed the system of 'bribing men to become Christians', and delineated the Hindu belief that conversion amounted to perversion.

By conversion the Christians meant 'the reorientation of the soul of an individual... a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right. It is seen

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) vol. 5, p. 314 (Hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*)

2. *The Random House Dictionary* (College Edn.) (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1976) pp. 854-55.

3. A Baptist missionary of England (1761-1834) who pioneered the Christian missions to India in the latter part of 18th century. Through his influence 'The particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen' was formed in 1892. He translated the Bible into 24 Indian dialects besides compiling grammars and dictionaries of several languages. See W. Benham, *The Dictionary of Religion* (London, 1891) pp. 206-7.

4. A Scottish Presbyterian missionary who remained in Calcutta from 1830 to 1863 and did much to promote education and social reform. He was an inveterate critic of Hinduism and made some converts among the educated section of the people of Bengal. See Sachchidananda Bhattacharya, *A Dictionary of Indian History* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1967) pp. 315-16.

5. Swami Vivekananda's letter to Professor Wright, May 1894. See *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) p. 97.

at its fullest in the positive response of a man to the choice set before him by the prophetic religions...' In its essence it was regarded as 'a turning away from a sense of present wrongness at least as much as a turning towards a positive ideal.' During his tour of the mid-western parts of America, Swami Vivekananda was often questioned whether he was going to convert the people. 'I take this for an insult', he retorted. 'I do not believe in this idea of conversion. Today we have a sinful man; tomorrow according to your idea he is converted and by and by attains unto holiness. Whence comes this change?'

It may be noted that Christianity has throughout been a missionary religion. The first records of the Church, as contained in the *Acts of the Apostles*, are almost entirely a narrative of the first Christian missions. Baron Von Welz went to Dutch Guiana to rouse a missionary spirit among the Lutherans. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg and Henry Plutschau went to Tranquebar to spread the gospel of Christ. St. Columbinus of Leinster went to the mountainous region of the Vosges, near Besancon, to found the monasteries of Luxeuil and Fontaine. In England, 'The Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts' was founded in 1701 by the Royal Charter 'for the religious instruction of the Queen's subjects beyond the Seas.' The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799, to send missionaries to Asia and Africa. The United Congress of Missions which met on 28 September 1893 in the Columbus Hall of Chicago, appointed a committee to arrange an International Missionary Conference between the representatives of all the Evangelical Churches, to devise means for evangelizing the whole world. Ironically, Charles Carroll Bonney who was the chief architect of the World's Parliament of Religions presided over it. In his paper entitled 'Native Agencies—the chief hope of

National Evangelisation', Rev. J.T. Gracey of New York remarked that in India alone there were enough native Christians to evangelize the entire Empire. He prophesied that the day was not far off when Christianity would 'demolish forever the pagan religions.'

Swami Vivekananda's opposition to missionary enterprise must have come as a response to such designs of some proselytizing westerners. But he did not launch a counter proselytizing movement, though at times he argued that Vedanta could be the only universal religion. Does philosophy everywhere require missionaries? Vivekananda knew full well that truth will make its way everywhere. Darwin or Plato were no missionaries and yet the well known theories connected with their names have gained converts the world over. The printer and the postman are the greatest missionaries of the present day. A philosophy which has an intrinsic universal appeal wins its way in the world without any missionary help. Where eloquence and persuasion are necessary to appeal to the feelings and influence the conduct, there is always the need of a missionary. And Vedanta philosophy, of which Vivekananda himself was the embodiment, requires no more eloquence or personal influence. It is the realization of the philosophy that brings the power in the speaker. It is character which tells like a thunderbolt on the world. 'Out of silence and purity comes the word of power', said Vivekananda.

Was Swami Vivekananda a saint? The word is the gallicized form of the Latin *sanctus* which is the equivalent of the Greek *hagios*. The popular notion of the saint is that of a being of eminent holiness, who is one of the immediate disciples of an incarnation of God. The concept of saintliness pervades almost every religion of the world, whether ancient or contemporary. According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* saints are believed to be connected

in a special manner with what is viewed as sacred reality—gods, spiritual powers, mythical beings and other aspects of the sacred or holy. The religious person may have various relationships with the sacred : as seer, prophet, monk or other such personages. In the case of each of these however, a special kind of relationship is involved. Seers, for example, have an inspirational vision of the future ; prophets proclaim a revelation ; saviours are entrusted with effecting redemption, liberation or other salvatory conditions ; monks and nuns live religious life in accordance with ascetic regulations. Sainthood implies a special type of relationship to the holy, a relationship that is not automatically obtained by other religious personages through their performance of religious duties.⁶ And so the terms saint and missionary convey different meanings and point to two different varieties of holy beings nurtured in different environments.

Swami Vivekananda was primarily a monk or *sannyāsin*. A monk, originally, is a product of the orient. The missionary, though originated with the expansion of Buddhism, thrived more in the occident ; the former must be renunciatory in worldly matters,⁷ the latter may or may not be ; the former depends on his begging bowl, the latter may thrive on a salary ; the former is a mendicant at one time, a recluse at another but never a householder ; the latter has no such bindings. The essential traits of a monk or a *sannyāsin* are fearlessness, self-imposed poverty, purity, celibacy and pursuit of knowledge. Buddha became a monk in after life. Ramakrishna and Christ were monks all throughout.

Vivekananda described Jesus Christ as a *sannyāsin*. 'His religion is essentially fit for *sannyāsins* only', he said. 'His teachings may be summed up as : "Give up" ; nothing more being fit for the favoured few.'⁸ And when this all-renouncing monk turns into a man of highest realization, he knows himself as separate and higher one than a mere body-mind complex. 'A person in the divine consciousness', says the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (5.8-9) 'although engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving about, sleeping and breathing always knows within himself that he actually does nothing at all. Because while speaking, evacuating, receiving, opening or closing his eyes, he always knows that only the material senses are engaged with their objects and that he (the real self) is aloof from them.

The criteria of sainthood, as understood in the West, are martyrdom, holiness of life, miracles in life and after death. Sometimes he leaves behind a popular cult. A saint must go through the process of canonization before being officially recognized as a saint. This tradition is never in vogue in the order of *sannyāsins*.

Swami Vivekananda never described himself as a saint but preferred to be called a *sannyāsin*, although as a *sannyāsin* he deviated, willingly, from some of the age-old customs. Many even argued that he was not a monk in the orthodox sense of the term for he crossed the Jambū-dvīpa, partook of the western food, and attended musical concerts. The missionaries in the West even accused him of moving freely with lady devotees.⁹ But a truly realized soul ceases to see any distinction between man and woman. 'If the missionaries tell

6. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia*, (Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1977) vol. 16, p. 163.

7. *The Bhagavad-Gita* 9.28. 'By this principle of renunciation you will be liberated and come to me.'

8. *The Complete Works*, (1968) Vol. 6, p. 109.

9. In a letter to Diwanji Saheb written on 15 November 1894, he asserted: 'The Sannyasin has not lost a bit of his Sannyasinship, even his mode of living.' See *Complete Works* (1964), Vol. 8, p. 325.

you', he wrote to Alasinga, 'that I have ever broken the two great vows of the sannyasin—chastity and poverty—tell them that they are big liars.'¹⁰ As regards taking food from the western homes he remarked: 'If the people want me to keep strictly to any Hindu diet, please tell them to send me a cook and money enough to keep him.'¹¹ Few would understand the deep significance of Swami Vivekananda's undertaking a sea voyage. Orthodox pundits were unaware of the global responsibilities which India ascribed to him as a guardian and rejuvenator of the Hindu religion. In a letter to Diwanji Saheb on 15 November 1894, Swami Vivekananda argued as to why a *sannyāsin* should go abroad. 'The only claim you have to be recognised in the world is your religion', he wrote, 'and good specimens of our religious men are required to be sent abroad to give other nations an idea that India is not dead. Some representative men must come out of India and go to all the nations of the earth to show at least that you are not savages. You may not feel the necessity of it from your Indian home, but believe me, much depends on that for your nation. And a *sannyāsin* who has no idea of doing good to his fellows is a brute, not a *sannyāsin*. I am neither a sightseer, nor an idle traveller; but you will see, if you live to see, and bless me all your life.' It is impossible to imagine that the 19th century West would welcome an Indian monk in rags, with his head smeared with ash, his right hand holding a stick (*daṇḍa*) and his left hand a bowl (*kamaṇḍalu*). In Brooklyn they pulled Vivekananda by his turban, just out of mere 'curiosity'. The need of the time was to rise above the cramping superstitions, and work for mankind without confining oneself to local customs of India. 'I know my mission in

life', he wrote to Alasinga. 'I belong as much to India as to the world, no humbug about that.... What country has any special claim on me? Am I any nation's slave?'¹²

Naturally a question rises in our mind—was he not something more than a *sannyāsin*? Was he not a prophet? The theological definition of a prophet as being the anointed of God to teach the people, a soothsayer and a prognosticator of events, cannot always be authenticated by the tools of any historian. Common men can never know how a prophet ever heard the voice of the Almighty to lift up mankind. Swami Vivekananda never proclaimed himself a prophet like Bha'ullah nor did he preach because he had a revelation. Could he be classed with prophets and messiahs like Buddha and Christ? The incarnations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa were recognized only by a few in the epic age. It would be pertinent to remark that Christ's prophethood was established centuries after his death. A century has yet to elapse after the death of Swami Vivekananda.

The modern definition of a prophet as 'a man who experiences a sudden and profound dissatisfaction with things as they are, is fired with a new idea and launches out on a new path in a sincere conviction that he has been led by something external and objective....' amply fits the life of Swami Vivekananda. 'Every prophet has a message', says A.D. Nock, 'which he feels an inward and instant impulse to deliver. He can do nothing else; the truth has been vouchsafed to him'. Vivekananda once remarked: 'There were times in older days when prophets were many in every society. The time is to come when prophets will walk through every street in every city of the world.... And the whole question devolves upon us: "Do we want to be

10. *The Complete Works* (1973), Vol. 5, p. 95.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

prophets? If we want, we shall be.”¹³ To the West lost in the slough of materialism, and to India buried under centuries of inertia, he spoke on different wavelengths and delivered separate messages.

Swami Vivekananda was not an apologist for everything Indian. Nor did he make a wholesale condemnation of everything western. Like a true prophet he saw the East and the West as the two halves of human consciousness—the two channels of energy—the *yin* and the *yan*, the *ida* and the *pingala* through which the cosmic power flowed. The one was relatively dynamic and restless, the other basically quiescent and meditative; the one relied too much on reason, the other depended too much on faith; the one yearned for progress in the material world, the other searched within for peace. Both were in a state of incompleteness. By themselves they were incomplete, partial and insular. Hence each must take an existential leap in the missing dimension of its consciousness, get in touch with its ‘complementary opposite’, exchange notes on areas of mutual interest, and create a balance between spirituality and material progress.

Only a prophet of the stature of Swami Vivekananda could welcome the global rise of working classes. His prophetic words uttered long before the Russian or the Chinese revolution strike us with wonder even today, ‘Let new India arise.... Let her arise—out of peasants’ cottages, grasping the plough, out of the huts of fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from grocer’s shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from groves and forests, from hills and mountains.’ In Ramnad, where he landed on the *Puṇyabhūmi Bhāratavarṣa* after his triumphant success in the West, he sang in prophetic tone the saga of the future of

India: ‘The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles; the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.’¹⁴

Today the global rise of India, despite many problems, is a fact. And Vivekananda saw this great and independent rejuvenation of our motherland at a time when the bravest and the best of Indians were at the most thinking of a peaceful survival under a foreign domination. Only a visionary like Vivekananda could predict the coming revolution in Russia and China, much to the unbelief of his listeners. Only a seer like Vivekananda could prophesy the rise of the religion of Vedanta as the spiritual anodyne of the future world tormented by the poisons of a materialistic civilization. Only a Vivekananda could see the emergence of a new generation of ‘supermen’ and ‘superwomen’ who would combine in their lives the western dynamism and Indian spirituality. Today each of his words has come true. What shall we call him who made all these infallible prophecies?

13. *The Complete Works* (1968). Vol. 6, pp. 10-11.

14. *The Complete Works* (1964) Vol. 3, pp. 145-46.

ABBOT WILLIAM OF SAINT-THIERRY

FR. M. BASIL PENNINGTON, O.C.S.O.

In their study of the thousand years of the history of the Abbey of Saint Thierry, France, scholars seem to agree that the hour of glory for the monastery on Mount Hor coincides with the fourteen years that William of Liege sat in the abbot's chair. If we were to ask William what he considered to be his greatest achievement during those years, his response would be a personal one, a subjective one. All his writings prepare us for this. He would say that the most important thing he did during those years was to become a contemplative, a man, a monk who truly sought God. If we pressed him further, and asked what he thought was his greatest achievement precisely as *abbot*, I think he would reply: 'To have opened the transcendent life to my monks'.

Historians might have answered the question for William differently, perhaps giving an answer which we would think to be more objective. Most would probably point to his leadership at the Benedictine reform chapters as his great achievement, or the whole of his activity in fostering monastic renewal.

But if we reflect a little more, we will perhaps see the validity of William's answer (or my guesses as to what would be his answer). For, behind all that he accomplished in his community and his ability to accomplish at home and abroad was his own personal monastic life with its depth and quality of transcendent understanding and life.

A Literary Heritage

It is possible to marshal a certain number of historical facts concerning the life of

William of Saint Thierry and his abbatial rule. Yet the image they portrayed for us would remain fairly hollow if we could not gain access to his thought, and above all, to his spirituality. We are indeed fortunate, especially when we consider the paucity of manuscripts in the tradition, that we do have in our hands today so many of William's spiritual writings.

I would see this as a special disposition of a very benign Providence who knew not only the great need of our times but how exceptionally well the very personal, open and existential writings of the Abbot of Saint Thierry would respond to our needs. Without hesitation the seeker of the late twentieth century can turn to these writings and find in them a very relevant and helpful guide and spiritual master. We too can turn to them in our quest to learn how William himself strove to live. For, what Gregory the Great said of Saint Benedict is no doubt equally true of William: 'Anyone who wishes to know more about his life and character can discover in his Rule (his writings) exactly what he was like as an abbot, for his life could not have differed from his teaching.'

We can, I believe, trace out William's own spiritual itinerary through his writings. Around 1119 he paid his first visit to Bernard of Clairvaux. It was for him a profound experience which had a lasting effect on his life, as we can easily see by the way he wrote of it some thirty years later. It was in a way a conversion experience and came on the eve of another great change in his life, his election as abbot of Saint Thierry. Coming into contact with a man who so uniquely embodied the transcendent ideal of the Christian tradition, William's thoughts and aspirations turned in that direction.

To Seek His Face

My concern in this particular paper is to indicate something of the way William traced out for his men as their spiritual father. He was very conscious of a divine call to serve his monks as spiritual father. Again and again in his writings he speaks of his willing reluctance to leave aside his own leisure and enjoyment of the delights of contemplation in order to serve his sons and lead them into those same delights.

The path he sought to trace out for his followers and along which he strode is illumined by the face of God. This expression, drawn especially from the Psalms, is central and constant in his spiritual writings. Its meaning and significance are perhaps most fully and concisely developed in the third of William's *Meditations*, those soliloquies which he considered apt 'for forming novices' minds to prayer'. By God's grace William finds himself drawn in this safe and sure way of life and points it out to his reader :

I seek your face, by your own gift I seek your countenance.... I know indeed and I am sure that those who walk in the light of your countenance do not fall but walk in safety, and by your face their every judgment is directed. They are the living people, for their life is lived according to that which they read and see in your face as in an exemplar.

What precisely does William mean when he speaks of seeking the face of God? What is he looking for, to what way is he pointing? He himself in the same *Meditation* asks this question : 'By your almightiest goodness, Lord, I pray you, by your most tender patience toward us, yield something to my quest, and tell my soul what she desires when she seeks your face.' And in response we hear that the Triune God, through the Holy Spirit, 'reveals himself to any friend of God on whom he would bestow especial honour', so that he sees God

'as the Father sees the Son, or the Son the Father but not in every way the same'.

There is trace of an apophasis in William's teaching : '... reason cannot see God except in what he is not.... What, indeed, can reason grasp, however hard it may try, of which it dare say, "This is my God"? It can discover what he is only by inferring from what it knows him not to be.... That knowledge is best known in this life by unknowing; the highest knowledge that a man can here and now attain consists in knowing in what way he does not know.'

Yet, essentially, William's way is a way of light, filled with illuminating grace. As William immediately went on to say in this same *Meditation* :

And yet, O Lord, though you have made the darkness of our ignorance and human blindness the secret place that hides your face from us, nevertheless your pavilion is round about you, and some of your saints undoubtedly were full of light. They glowed and they gave light, because they lived so close to your light and your fire. By word and example they kindled and enlivened others, and they declared to us the solemn joy of this supreme knowledge of you, for which we look hereafter, when we shall see you as you are, and face to face. Meanwhile, through them the lightnings of your truth have illumined the world, and flashes have shone forth that rejoice those whose eyes are sound; although they trouble and perturb those who love darkness rather than light.

William not only wanted to have 'sound eyes', he wanted to be and was one of those saints 'full of light' who 'kindled and enlightened others'.

William speaks beautifully, with much feeling, about the human face of Christ Jesus. He was certainly one with Saint Bernard in his tender devotion to the Passion of Christ. Meditation on the Passion was important in William's teaching, especially for the beginner in his efforts to control his many thoughts—a kind of plague of flies that erupts into one's eyes and almost

drives one out of his own house. In his very practical advice on this matter William tells how one is to call to mind and summon to his aid those thoughts that he has drawn out of the Saviour's wells.

Yet, like the other Cistercian Fathers, William is quick to quote St. Paul : 'Even if we did once know Christ in the flesh, that is not how we know him now'. If we, 'attracted to the human form of him who is one Person with the Son of God, develop a sort of carnal devotion, we do not err'. For, as William 'confidently asserts' in speaking to the Lord :

It was not the least of the chief reasons for your incarnation that your babes in the Church, who still need your milk rather than solid food, who are not strong enough spiritually to think of you in your own way, might find in you a form not unfamiliar to themselves. In the offering of their prayers they might set this form before themselves, without any hindrance to faith, while they are still unable to gaze into the brightness of the majesty of your divinity. Yet in so doing we do retard and hinder spiritual prayer.

William himself, however, wanted to 'wholly enter into Jesus' very heart', for it was 'the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant, the golden urn, the soul of our humanity that holds within itself the manna of the Godhead...' He wanted to see the very face of God. For to see God is faith's proper desire. But how is this to come about?

First of all, one must go beyond, or leave off all images, thoughts and concepts.

Of what avail are mental images? Can reason, or rational understanding, effect anything? No. For, although reason sends us to you, O God, it cannot of itself attain to you. Neither does that understanding which, as a product of reason, has lower matter for its sphere of exercise, go any farther than does reason itself; it is powerless to attain you.

One must turn to the other eye of spiritual vision : 'There are two eyes of the spiritual

vision forever straining to see the Light which is God, and their names are love and reason.'

The 'soul's sense is love; by love it perceives whatever it perceives. Love leaves behind what God is not, and rejoices to lose itself in what he is'. When the lover reaches out in this way, a certain change takes place in him by which he is transmuted into the Object loved : he does not become the same nature as that Object, but by his affection he is conformed to what he loves. For William this is the work of the Holy Spirit. The common Will and mutual Love of the Father and the Son, he is given to us to make us like God, seeing the Father as the Son sees him, and seeing the Son as the Father sees the Son, and to unite us to them. Thus the image of God is restored in us.

O Charity, Charity, you have brought us to this that, because we love God and the Son of God, we are called and we are gods and the sons of God.

And yet we are never to say 'It is enough!' 'It does not yet appear what we shall be'. Whatever awareness we have here of seeing God, whatever faith here teaches us about him, is a riddle, darker at times, indeed, at others clearer. This connatural knowledge or understanding which comes from above controls the believing mind when and as far as the Holy Spirit wills. He serves to soothe the lover, for there is clearly nothing in it of that which is not God, and although it is not wholly what God is, it is not different from the Reality.

Thus William portrays the deepest, fullest and richest meaning of Christian life in a very simple and direct way. He invites his disciples to begin with meditation on the human life of Christ, and through his blessed passion to come into contact with the divine love which it preeminently reveals. Love calls forth love and the love called

forth transforms the lover into the likeness of the Beloved, a likeness which changes communion into union with the Triune. So simply then does William trace out the way and express the call to transforming union.

The Monastic Context

Yet this love affair does not develop in a vacuum. And William is well aware of it. The monastic way of life is there to create a climate most favourable to fostering its growth.

The 'labour of obedience' is an essential element. William has the Lord address these words to him:

I will go before you, and you must follow as you see me go before. I endured and laboured and you must labour too. I suffered many things; it behoves you, too, to suffer some. Obedience is the way to charity, and you will get there if you keep to it.

Especially does he exhort the beginner to walk in this way. The neophyte does not yet have the knowledge and experience he needs and so he must submit his judgement to one who knows the way if he wishes not to be lost. But if he is to be severe with himself in being gently and obediently humble toward the fathers and brothers who guide him, they are to moderate his severity and be properly indulgent, lest he loses heart.

Furthermore, he is to be supported by the exercises of the common life. Lofty though his spiritual doctrine be, summoning his disciples to the very heights, William fully appreciated the importance of a well-moderated daily observance. In his well-developed treatise on love he speaks explicitly of the role of the various monastic practices, great and small, in the way of obedient love:

The beginner in obedience must embrace cleanness of heart, purity of body, and silence, or well controlled speech. His eyes must not wander. He must not look proud. His ears

must not be itching to hear. If he is temperate in food and sleep, he will not hinder the efficacy of a diet of good works. His hands should be held in check and his gait should be quiet. Lewdness of heart should not burst out in a loud laugh, but a sweet smile should show its grace. He must be conscientious in reading and meditation—and these should be spiritual and not prompted by mere curiosity. He must show subjection to his superiors; he must reverence the elder brethren and cherish the younger ones. He must not wish to be in a position of authority, but must love to be commanded. He must wish to be useful to everyone. He must not let severity overwhelm him, nor mildness make him soft. Let him have cheerfulness in his face and sweetness in his heart towards all, and kindness in all his acts. For this is the time and place for sloughing off sensuality, for rooting out vice and breaking self-will...let him who loves the more run the faster.

As the beginner progresses, the role of the observances as factors fostering formation and development will become less significant. They will become more the expressions of fraternal love and harmony.

But even though one hold steadfastly to the labour of obedience and the exercises of the common life and be free from the burdens of past sin, he does not always progress steadily on the way of love. 'For so long as "the body that is subject to corruption weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that muses upon many things", the soul is bound to experience vicissitudes, however much it loves'. For, as William says to the Lord:

As I see it, love is a natural thing, but to love you belongs to grace; the feeling of love is a manifestation of grace, and of that the Apostle says: 'To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal.... In the soul of your poor servant, therefore, Lord, your love is always present; but it is hidden like the fire in the ashes till the Holy Spirit, who blows where he wills, is pleased to manifest it profitably in the way and to the extent he wishes.'

Thus as one makes his way along this path of transforming love, seeking the face

of God, obedience and docility to the Holy Spirit are essential. God's ways are not always those that men would spontaneously choose.

William certainly experienced this. He had to cope constantly with a frustrated desire for greater contemplative leisure as the 'truth of love' summoned him to the service of his sons and brothers. He sums up his balanced understanding of the matter in *Meditation Eleven* :

Let us review our affections and actions. Let our affections be set on the centre of truth, and then outward actions will correspond thereto—Every affection is indeed owed to God. When he is adhered to faithfully, wherever the circle of activity revolves, it cannot err.... Affection is sufficient if circumstances do not demand action or the possibility of acting is lacking. For, when the demands of love require action, true charity owes it to God or to a neighbour, as the case may be; if necessity does not require it, the love of truth makes it our duty to hold ourselves at leisure for itself. And as we always owe our entire affection to God, so also when we are at leisure, we owe our whole activity to him.... But anyone whom need summons to action must not be so eager to perform that he fails to take stock of his own ability. The centre of truth must be consulted as to whether he has the ability to do it. If he has not, and yet presumes to act, he is not cleaving to the centre.... Let him from whom action is urgently demanded, if indeed he can perform it, fix his attention on the truth, and not refuse to do the act of service. If the truth, when consulted, tells him he is unequal to the task and no fit person for it, then let him fix his soul in stillness on the stability of truth....

It must be admitted though that although William taught and lived a doctrine that preserved the true balance and relationship between holy leisure and fruitful activity, yet he places relatively little emphasis on community life. This is no doubt influenced by his own eremitical leanings.

Yet, in his *ex professo* treatise on love, the Abbot does not fail to develop this essential dimension of Christian charity.

To cite just one very beautiful expression of this :

Likewise the holy souls of whom we speak, if made superiors, acquit themselves of their office with all solicitude, and are like fathers to their sons. But if they are made subject to others, then they obey with humility and are like sons to their fathers. If they are obliged to live with others, they do so with charity. If they live in community, they make themselves the servants of all. They are lovingly inclined towards everyone, and live in peaceful agreement about all that is good. They come together with joy, and go out of their way to show charity towards one another. To those who are below them in any way, they show a tender affection in their deeds. On their elders they bestow love to the point of subjection. To those above them their obedience goes as far as slavery. They do not seek their own interests, but those of the brethren. Whenever possible they make the common good their own, in spite of detriment to themselves. For they have received that pledge which is the Holy Spirit's gift, and they know that bodily service will soon pass into the adoption of those who will be revealed as the sons of God. Therefore they find it easy to bend both body and will to whatsoever thing the greatest of commandments orders.

And later in the same treatise he becomes almost lyrical as he describes the effect on the community life of a full living out of the way of love.

These brethren find that the least touch (of Divine Wisdom) carries such an incitement to charity that their monastery becomes a very paradise of spiritual delight. Their transfigured faces and bodies, their holy life and behaviour, their mutual service and devotion, so bind each brother to his brothers that their hearts and souls cannot but be one. The future glory, which will be perfect in the life to come, stands revealed in them already.

Thus we see that for Abbot William the search for the face of God was to be lived out in and supported by a monastic milieu created by obedience, monastic observance, conversion, docility to the Holy Spirit,

contemplation and active service in a community of brothers.

Conclusion

In these pages I have relied almost exclusively on the writings that date to William's abbatial service. Many texts from his later writings could be brought forward to underline the doctrine found here. During the ensuing years, his doctrine was deepened

and enriched until it was set forth in a somewhat different framework in that masterful synthesis which has rightly been called the *Golden Epistle*. Yet in this earlier teaching I do not think there is any essential of that later synthesis lacking. And certainly there is, as I hope my brief presentation has indicated, a teaching that is more than sufficient to inspire and lead a community of monks to the fullest experience of Christian life and mysticism.

They Lived with God

MANINDRA KRISHNA GUPTA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

A man prays to God for what he loves most. A lover of wealth prays for money; a lover of name and fame prays for recognition; a lover of pleasure prays for enjoyments; a lover of aesthetics prays for beauty; a lover of the body prays for good health; a lover of knowledge prays for intellectual pursuits. Most people love God's powers, but few love God. We do not realize that if we seek God, we will attain God as well as the wisdom and strength to handle worldly success. If, however, we seek only success and power, we may get them, but eventually they become a bondage.

Once Sri Ramakrishna asked Manindra Krishna Gupta: 'What do you want?' 'I want to express my ideas about the beauty of the world and human nature—that is my desire', replied the young Manindra. 'That is fine', said Sri Ramakrishna with a smile. 'But if you realize God, you will achieve everything.'

In 1870 Manindra Krishna Gupta was born in Calcutta. His grandfather, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, was a famous poet. Manindra's family was related not only to 'M', the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, but also to Keshab Chandra Sen, the famous Brahmo leader. After Sri Ramakrishna and Keshab met, the Master's name quickly spread among the followers of the Brahmo Samaj as well as the younger generation of Bengal. Upendra Krishna Gupta (Manindra's elder brother), Karunamay Sen (Keshab's son), Brahmabandhav Upadhyay (Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyay), and other young Brahmos rented a house and formed a group called 'Youngmen's Nest'. These leaders used to teach young boys religion, morality, ethics, literature, and social work.

During the summer vacation or any holiday, Brahmabandhav would visit Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar with his friends. Since Brahmabandhav had great

affection for the young boys, he never missed opportunity to invite them. Thus Manindra met Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, probably in 1882. In his own words, he reminisced :

I was then about eleven or twelve years old. I remember that we used to go on a big boat and that the trip on the Ganga was very pleasant. When we had landed at Dakshineswar, we would bathe either in the Ganga or in the pond—swimming, splashing, and having lots of fun.

Afterwards we would assemble on the northern verandah of Sri Ramakrishna's room. The Master would put out an assortment of offered sweets, fruits, sugar candy syrup, and other delicacies, and he himself would invite us to partake of them. Thus I saw him several times, but all I remember is his sweet and affectionate manner.

After partaking of the *prasād*, our senior members would listen to the teachings of the Master while we youngsters would play in the temple garden or sometimes just rest in the Panchavati.

One day, out of curiosity, I peeped through the eastern door of the Master's room. He was seated on his small cot and I can still remember that he had a small bag containing cinnamon, cloves, and other spices. Now and then as he talked he would take a few of them and put them in his mouth. I don't remember what he was talking about, but one thing I do remember: Pointing to the young audience in his room, he said: 'Look, here is a gathering of bright jewels'. I was so impressed seeing his beautiful, loving face, that I could not turn to look in any other direction. I stood there for some time, forgetting everything. When my other companions left his room and moved towards the boat, I followed them.

Because of his father's work, Manindra's family moved to Bhagalpur, so he was not able to see the Master for three years. Then he returned to Calcutta where he enrolled in school. Caring very little for the school curriculum, he used to study art and literature at home. Soon his guardians discovered that Manindra, instead of going to school, was visiting the eastern part of Calcutta to enjoy the natural beauty of the

meadow and canal. They scolded him, but could not change his attitude.

In September of 1885, Sri Ramakrishna moved to Shyampukur, Calcutta, for his cancer treatment. One afternoon Sarada Babu, an acquaintance of Manindra's, asked him, 'Would you like to go with me on a visit?' Manindra had previously accompanied him on walks through the countryside, so he agreed. Seeing that Manindra had misunderstood, Sarada explained further: 'But today I am not going for a walk. Sri Ramakrishna is now living in a house at Shyampukur. Let us go and see him.' Immediately Manindra dressed properly and the two left for Shyampukur.

When they arrived there, Sri Ramakrishna was in his room with 'M.' and Swami Vivekananda. The Master was reclining on his bed, facing north. As soon as Manindra and Sarada entered, the Master rose, and they saluted him. Sri Ramakrishna looked intently at Manindra, then beckoned him to come closer. He smiled a little and whispered: 'Come alone tomorrow. Don't come with him.' Sarada could not hear what the Master had said.

Later, on their way home, Sarada, out of curiosity, asked Manindra, 'What did he say to you?' Manindra was a little hesitant to tell him what the Master had actually said, so he gave a passing answer, 'Well, the Master asked me to visit him another day'. 'My boy, your luck is good', said Sarada. 'He did not talk to me at all.'

On his way home, Manindra felt an irresistible attraction to the Master. It was hard for him to sleep that night, and a strange thing happened. He continually saw Sri Ramakrishna's smiling face all around him and heard his voice saying, 'Come alone tomorrow'. Manindra wrote in his memoirs :

Some may think that because I was then a teenage boy, my description is somewhat

exaggerated. But please remember that truth never changes with the passing of time, nor does one's experience. The joy of seeing the moon when one is young is the same as the joy of seeing it when one is old. At any rate, I remember vividly that I had struggled to sleep the whole night and that it was not until the early hours of the morning that I finally fell asleep.

The next afternoon I started again for Shyampukur. I saw 'M.' and some other devotees in the Master's room....It appeared to me that the Master knew of my coming and was waiting to receive me. Before I could sit down, he asked everyone to leave the room and for me to come sit near him.

'Where have you been for so long?' he asked. Saying this, the Master burst into tears. He addressed me as though I were a near and dear relative. He touched me, and I noticed a slight smile on his face. Then all of a sudden, his body became stiff like a corpse. I remained motionless. What was this? Never having seen *samādhi* before, I knew nothing about it and was quite at a loss. I checked his breath, but could detect no sign of it. His eyes were half-closed and his eyelids were motionless.

After fifteen minutes, I saw that he was gradually returning to normal consciousness. Then, touching my chest, he muttered something and asked me in a deep voice, 'What do you want?'

Manindra had the feeling that the Master would give him anything he wanted. But there is a saying: 'If a husking machine goes to heaven, it continues to husk there.' Manindra was a boy of poetry and imagination. He loved the beauty of nature. Without considering the pros and cons, he spontaneously voiced his desire to express his feelings about beauty.

Manindra then began to cry. The Master asked the devotees to take him to the next room. It took them half an hour to stop him from crying and to bring him down from that emotional experience. After that, Manindra became a frequent visitor to the Master and began to serve him under the direction of Swami Vivekananda, who was then the leader of the Master's young disciples.

As Manindra was one of the youngest in the group, the disciples and devotees called him 'Khoka' (young boy). There were not sufficient accommodations for several attendants in the small Shyampukur house, so Manindra would serve Sri Ramakrishna during the day and spend the night at Ram Chandra Datta's house. Gradually he became well known among the devotees of the Master.

One night during the fall of 1885, there was a meteor shower in Calcutta. The next evening Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar visited Sri Ramakrishna as usual. While there, Dr. Sarkar and other devotees discussed in English the meteor shower in front of the Master. Manindra was present and he reminded them that the Master could not understand what they were talking about, since he did not know English. Sri Ramakrishna looked at them blankly, then slowly went into *samādhi*.

Gradually the Master returned to the normal plane and said: 'Hello, what are you talking about? I saw a meteor shower in this vast universe which is pervaded by Brahman. Are you talking about that?' The devotees, especially Dr. Sarkar, were amazed to hear these words of the Master. But Sri Ramakrishna was very much against miracle-mongering. Once he said: 'Look, if you see that a monk is trying to show his miraculous powers, know for certain that he does not have an iota of spirituality. He is a hypocrite.'

Manindra also recorded another interesting incident which occurred at the Shyampukur house:

One day the Master was returning from the bathroom to his room, which was across the verandah. I was waiting for him on the northern verandah, and I also followed him. I noticed that Ram Chandra Datta and some other devotees entered the Master's room. Seeing Ram, the Master said: 'Hello, Ram. Just now I had a vision of a monk with a well-built body who was

wearing an ochre loin cloth. I have never seen him before.'

Ram replied with a smile: 'Sir, what do we know? You see so many things in heaven and earth—how can we comprehend them all?' 'Really I have seen a monk', said the Master. 'But I don't know who he is.' My memory of that simple, childlike statement is still vivid. Then the subject was dropped. Slowly the Master sat down on his bed. Ram and other devotees sat in front of him. I sat in the room adjacent to the Master's, which was near the steps. About an hour later, I saw a man come upstairs. He wore a black shirt and a black cap. It seemed to me that he was a native of Bihar. He asked me: 'Sir, does Ramakrishna Paramahansa live here? I have come to see him. Could I see him right away?' 'Of course', I replied. 'Please follow me'. I took him to the Master's room.

After sitting there quietly for a while, he said to the Master: 'Sir, I am a Christian, and for a long time I have meditated in solitude on Christ. Though I am a Christian and my Chosen Deity is Christ, my mode of worship is like the Hindus, and I believe in their yoga scriptures. Once I had a desire to find someone who had attained the highest spiritual realization while still in the world. One day in meditation, I saw two persons. I had the strong feeling that one of them had attained the highest, and that the other one, seated at his feet, though he had not yet reached the highest, was not an ordinary person.

'After this vision, I felt certain that such great souls must exist, but where were they, and how could I find them? I travelled to many places, especially in the western part of India, seeking the two I had seen in my vision. At last I heard of Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur, and I went to see him. But when I met him, I was greatly disappointed, because he bore no resemblance whatsoever to either of the two men I was seeking. But to my astonishment, I saw a picture of one of them hanging on the wall in his room. When I asked Pavhari Baba about it, he said it was a picture of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Eagerly I asked, "Where can I find him?" Then Pavhari Baba told me that for many years he had lived at Dakshineswar, but was now very ill and had been moved to Calcutta for treatment by his devotees. So I am here, having come to Calcutta at Pavhari Baba's suggestion.'

Then the man went on to say, 'These clothes

in which you see me are not my usual dress'. And as he spoke he stood up and removed his outer garments, revealing an ochre cloth. Instantly the Master also stood up and went into *samādhi*, raising his hand, as it is seen in the picture of Christ. At this, the monk knelt down before him with folded hands and looked intently at Sri Ramakrishna. The monk was shedding tears and was shivering.

We were all amazed to see the spiritual moods of both. And as my gaze again fell on his ochre cloth, I wondered: 'Is this the holy man in ochre dress whom the Master had seen in his vision?'

After some time, the Master came back to normal consciousness and sat on his bed. The monk looked at us, his face beaming with joy, and exclaimed, 'Today I am blessed'. Then he continued more calmly: 'As you see, this inner cloth is my regular dress, and it is also my favourite dress because it is worn by the yogis of India. I was born in a brahmin family, and even though I am a Christian, why should I give up the traditions of my ancestors? I have great faith in our Indian manners and customs.'

Then we took him to an adjacent room, where Swami Vivekananda offered him prasada and food. Finally, we asked the monk* to tell us the cause of his ecstasy. 'Well', he replied, 'today I saw the one on whom I have meditated for so many years. I saw Lord Jesus in him'.

At Shyampukur, though the Master's illness was growing more serious every day, people flocked to him in greater numbers in order to satisfy their spiritual longing. Manindra, Sarada (later, Swami Trigunatitananda), and other newcomers received special instruction from the Master during this time. Because Manindra's nature was soft and emotional, he used to dance in ecstasy on hearing the Lord's name. On October 30, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna said to 'M.': 'Manindra has an element of *prakṛti*, of womanliness. He has read the life of Caitanya and has understood the attitude of the *gopīs*. He has also realized that God is *Puruṣa* and man is *prakṛti*, and

*The monk's name was Prabhudayal Mishra. His birthplace was in the western part of India, and he belonged to the Quaker sect in Christianity.

that man should worship God as His handmaid. How remarkable !

On 6 November 1885, the devotees made arrangements for Kālī Pūja according to the direction of the Master. Doctor Sarkar and several other devotees visited the Master, and the doctor asked to hear some songs. 'M.', Girish, and Kalipada sang, and while listening to their songs, Manindra and Latu entered into a spiritual mood.

After Sri Ramakrishna moved again to Cossipore, following the advice of his doctors, Manindra took an active part in serving him. The Holy Mother once mentioned an incident which happened there : 'When the Master was sick, Manindra and Paltu [two teenage devotees of the Master] were fanning him. It was the day of the *Holi festival* [an auspicious day when Kṛṣṇa played with the *gopīs* with coloured dyes], and all were playing with the colours outside. The Master repeatedly asked the two boys to join in the festival, but they continued to stay and serve the Master. Seeing their love and devotion, the Master exclaimed, "Look, these boys are my Rāmlāla [the child Rāma]."'

Manindra was well aware that Sri Ramakrishna was his *guru* and Chosen Deity. But when Kumud Bandhu Sen once asked Manindra about his initiation, he was told : 'One day I was seated near the Master. Mahim Chakrabarty was present at that time, and he said to the Master : "Last night I saw in a dream that I was giving a *mantra* to Manindra according to your direction." The Master asked him to repeat the mantra. As soon as Mahim Chakrabarty did so, the Master went into *samādhi*. Afterwards, when he came down to the normal plane, he asked Mahim to give me that *mantra*.'

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Manindra put on the ochre cloth

at the behest of Mahim Chakrabarty and lived with him. He always kept in close contact with the monastic disciples of the Master, who were then at the Baranagore monastery. Later he returned home, married, and had several children.

Though Manindra did not finish his schooling, he continued his studies under the supervision of a private tutor until his marriage. His tutor was a brilliant man, and it was through his efforts that Manindra became proficient in literature. Manindra's grandfather, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, had founded a daily newspaper, *Sambād Prabhākar*, which was later inherited by Manindra's father. Since Manindra was reluctant to accept outside work for a living, his guardians encouraged him to edit and manage the newspaper. Through this work, he became acquainted with the famous writers of Bengal—Suresh Chandra Samajpati, Akshay Kumar Baral, and others.

Gradually Manindra became involved in the theatre, and he began to write dramas. As a result, the newspaper was neglected. Unfortunately, he did not appear to have any significant talent in playwriting, so his financial condition soon became critical. In 1897, when Swami Vivekananda returned to India from the West, he came to know of Manindra's financial difficulties and asked Swami Brahmananda to give Manindra twelve hundred rupees so that his family would not starve. While accepting the gift, Manindra burst into tears at the thought of Swamiji's generosity and love for him.

Manindra would visit Alambazar Math, Belur Math, Dakshineswar, and Yogodyana regularly. On auspicious occasions, he would arrange a festival of Sri Ramakrishna at his house and invite devotees. He kept in close touch with the monastic and household disciples of the Master. Holy Mother was very fond of Manindra, and it was due to his influence that several members of his family received initiation from her.

During the later part of his life, when his sons became capable of earning money themselves, Manindra's financial condition improved. Quite often he would visit 'M.' and Swamis Saradananda and Shivananda. At Swami Saradananda's request, Manindra wrote his reminiscences of the Master, and it was published serially in the *Udbodhan* (Vol. 38 to Vol. 41).

After retirement, he spent most of his

time thinking and talking about Sri Ramakrishna. Although his outer life had not been very successful, his inner life blossomed through the grace of the Master. Whenever Manindra would speak of Sri Ramakrishna and his devotees, his eyes would fill with tears of joy. Manindra passed away in 1939 at the age of sixty-nine at his Calcutta residence. He was a simple, sincere, and humble soul.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Peacelessness in Punjab

Punjab is burning. 'The holiest even in holy Aryavarta', as Vivekananda once called Punjab, is today in deep agony. This is the land where ages before the Vedas and the Upanishads were written on the banks of five rivers. These are the heroic people who shed their blood in the past in order to protect India, her culture, her religion and above all her sovereignty. Alexander had to return from Punjab. Other foreign invaders faced the toughest resistance in these areas. Punjab stood as the sleepless sentinel of India throughout history. Even today Punjab holds and maintains the granary for the nation.

This Punjab is in flames today. Since the beginning of this decade, the equilibrium of life in this land is lost. Killings and counter-killings have severely shaken the sense of security in the people. Vested interests, parading of weapons in the holy precincts of religion, and fundamentalism are creating havocs. Above all, a persistent and cold-blooded terrorism, the dreaded disease of modern politics, have brought a rift between so long friendly communities of the Sikhs and the Hindus. The rift seems to be widening day by day. Communities which never knew the slightest disharmony, and which lived in perfect peace and unity throughout centuries are today polarized. Dialogue is virtually stopped. Resentment and suspicion reign everywhere. Even the closest friends and neighbours have lost trust in each other. Death is stalking high on the streets of Punjab. People are living unpredictable moments at the mercy of stenguns. Despite all possible assurances and active steps taken by the state and central

governments, the solution to Punjab crisis seems to be receding. Despite peace-marches, pada-yatras, intellectuals' appeals and social workers' desperate attempts, peace is no where in sight.

Why? What has really gone wrong in Punjab? Sikhism was originally born to defend the mother-church, Hinduism. The tenth Sikh Guru Govind Singh, 'one of the most glorious heroes of our race,' as Vivekananda called him, transformed the meek Sikhs into courageous lions—Singhs. He did this, and even sacrificed his own father, four sons, friends, disciples and ultimately himself, in the cause of the defence of Hinduism. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru who collected the *Adi Granth* had to accept death from emperor Jehangir, for this labour.

The teachings of 'gentle' Guru Nanak, who founded the Sikh religion during the time of Babar, the first Moghul emperor of India, are both ritualistic and philosophical. Rituals he made for a spiritual strengthening of the masses. Philosophy he accepted as the base of Sikhism. The philosophy is purely Vedantic, while the rituals were meant for a courageous defence of India and its religion against foreign aggressors. 'He who has known his own Self', says Nanak, 'is the true knower'. 'See one in all', says Guru Arjan Dev. Who is a Guru? Says the *Adi Granth*: 'He is a Satguru in whose company our minds get happiness. The restlessness of mind vanishes and perfection is attained.'

Nearly a century before Swami Vivekananda said: 'Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race. It never was, and, mark my words, it never will be'. Any attempt to solve our problems by materialistic

means will mean, Vivekananda said, 'that the whole race will be extinct in three generations'. 'The path of least resistance', in India, the path to solve national problems, is spirituality. 'We have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it', Vivekananda asserted. Politics, in its modern form, is, more or less, known to all of us. Its manoeuvres, tactics, and statements—all are directed towards one single goal: how to acquire and remain in power. Certainly there are in our country many statesmen and nationalists who, although in power, never belong to these categories and hence their words and actions always have a genuine appeal to the masses. But, by large, politics today is a scene where men rob, cheat and murder each other with a strange complacency, bringing out fully the 'animal' in man. How can mutual trust be secured by politics where the political leaders cannot trust their own right-hand colleagues? Aristotle thought of man as 'political animal'; Indians thought of man as child of immortality, or a biological body-mind complex inside which is eternally present the real Self of man, the Atman, the undying divinity. To manifest this inherent divinity is the function of religion.

The word religion again, unsettles us. It brings, at once, horrible memories of gun-wielding zealots and blood-stained temples. It seems we have forgotten the eternal truths of the Upanishadic religion which is the foundation of all religions born in India.

While touring Punjab, Vivekananda once had a strange experience. On a particular spot, the visions of past sages opened out before his prophetic eyes. He clearly saw a vast congregation of the holy sages discussing and exploring to ascertain the real nature of man. Suddenly one young sage, inspired with a divine realization, stood up, and sang out in deep musical intonations: 'Oh listen! Children of immortality even those that dwell in higher spheres. I have known that great Being who is like the effulgent sun beyond the veils of darkness. Knowing him alone, one attains immortality. There is no other way. There is no other way out.' So long as religion means this prophet or that book, this temple, or that god, there is no way for the total integration of Punjab or of India as a whole. Religion is the manifestation of man's divine nature, his higher Self. Books, rituals, or temples, are only different ways in order to reach that goal. They are not an end in themselves.

India is always the holy land. It spontaneously rises up and kneels before realized saints and sages. India taught the kings, as Tagore wrote, to come down from the throne, and sit on the ground in the dress of the beggar. Sivaji did that. Asoka did that and integrated the largest Indian nation ever known in history. This was his way of conquest, the path of dharma-vijaya. Today Kumbhamelas do not send invitations to anyone. Even then millions take holy dip on a single day. This is no ritual-madness. Calmly, with prayerful lips people belonging to all religions throng to these holy spots just to feel their own divinity, a nearness to God, a temporary lifting up to a higher life in the vibrating atmosphere sanctified by saints and devotees. National integration is created in such moments unobtrusively, silently. That is why Vivekananda said, 'National integration in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces....Sects, therefore, as a matter of course, must exist here, but what need not exist is sectarian quarrel. Sects must be, but sectarianism must not be'.

Today if the Hindu Mathadhipatis and Sikh priests can walk hand-in-hand in the disturbed towns of Punjab and if they can meet in these places even for a single day in the name of God, and kindle the fire of holiness and mutual love by their prayers and devotions, millions will come, feel blessed and their hearers will get united. Then only suspicion and hatred will slowly cease. Peace will return. Throughout history whenever we tried to give a political solution to a religious problem, we miserably failed. We have to give a true religious solution to our problems. When religion degenerates into politics, it becomes the worst tool for human destruction. The thirty years' war in Germany between the catholics and protestants, and the recent Iran-Iraq conflict are examples of such cases. When politics takes the path of religion, at least in India, it succeeds triumphantly. When Gandhi walked in Dandi, India followed him. He brought the tremendous moral force of religion into politics. Today we see just the opposite, a show of brutal forces in the arena of religion. We have now to press the moral forces of religion, the courage of purity and love, and the catholicity of religious pluralism, into service in order to solve the Punjab problem. It is possible and practical. We have to do it. The earlier, the better.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND THE WORLD OF YOUTH: BY NABANIHARAN MUKHOPADHYAY. Published by Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal. P.O. Balaram Dharma Sopan, Khardah, 24 Parganas, West Bengal 743 121. 1985. Pp. 220. Rs. 20.

This book is a collection of some brilliant Editorials previously published in *Vivek Jivan*—a bilingual monthly organ of Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal. The object of the Mahamandal is to rejuvenate Indian youth by working among them and 'upon their minds', as suggested by Swami Vivekananda, by infusing in them a sense of patriotism, by introducing them to the quintessence of the rich cultural heritage of India, and by inspiring them to undertake social service in a dedicated manner.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I dilates upon the problems of the Indian youth; Part II takes up the remedial measures for solving them; Part III lays stress on character building, and Part IV delineates the role of 'true' education in resolving a number of social issues.

The youth of today is restive and sullen. He is told that he is 'small, incomplete and incapable of doing anything big'. But the fact is that he has an immense potentiality in him; he is 'the centre of all power in society at large', and can change the course of history. 'In youth lies the seed of all good and well-being, but it is latent. The primary task is to resuscitate this dormant seed so that it can germinate and sprout', says N. Mukhopadhyay.

The nation is passing through a critical phase. While the rupee is overvalued, character is being devalued. We seem to have gone directionless while navigating on the sea of life; 'Our polestar is shut off by a cloud, the pointer of the compass, having lost its magnetism, is rotating crazily....We know not which shore to touch....We have lost faith in ourselves, in our own cruising power.'

How to overcome this crisis of confidence, of values and of character? Obviously we need to build a new man—a complete being who is not a schizophrenic or a cynic, but one who while appreciating the achievements of his forefathers works incessantly in the present, and remains away from the hallucinatory world of make-believes and wishful thinking. 'So from the worship of the dead past, O man, we invite

you to the worship of the living present, from the regretful brooding over by-gones, we invite you to the activities of the present', said Swami Vivekananda.

A nation is built brick by brick, and not all at once. Sincerity, self-confidence, hard work, love of country and the spirit of self-sacrifice—these are the prerequisites for social reconstruction. Legislation may not help much, but right education can metamorphose the character of people. Swami Vivekananda was right when he said that we are not much more moral than animals. 'We are only held down by the whips of society. If society said today, "I will not punish you if you steal", we would just make a rush for each other's property. It is the policeman that makes us moral.'

Another problem with us is that we are too much bothered about the shortcomings of others. We ignore our own follies and frailties and indulge in character assassination. We want to purify others not ourselves. The fact remains that it is the subjective world that rules the objective. 'Change the subject and the object is bound to change', said Swamiji. 'Purify yourself and the world is bound to be purified.'

N. Mukhopadhyay deserves to be complemented for producing a book which is both rich in style and content. It guides and inspires the reader from first to last.

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SRI JNANADEVA'S AMRITANUBHAVA (WITH CHANGDEVA PASASHTI): ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY R.K. BHAGAWAT. Published by Samata Books, 10 Kamraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Road, Madras 600 006. 1985. Pp. 149. Rs. 35.

Jñānadeva, the great saint and poet, who lived in the 13th century A.D., is known throughout Maharashtra for his *Jñanesvari*, a book read by the *warkaris* (pilgrims to Pandharpur) all the year round. This is an elaborate commentary on Bhagavad-Gita, garbed in an exquisite poetic language. It also elucidates the philosophy of Advaita in a most charming way. *Amṛtānubhava* is, however, Jñānadeva's original work and is a narration of the ineffable experience of self-realization. It is a lucid

exposition of Sivādvaita philosophy, first formulated by Gauḍapāda, the great grand-teacher of Adi Sankaracarya. The cardinal beliefs of this philosophy are:

1. There exists nothing else, except non-dual pure consciousness (Śiva) which is immutable, indescribable, unborn and imperishable and is the Supreme Self.

2. The Supreme Atman out of self-love becomes the Beloved, i.e. the active energy (Śakti).

3. The two together create on their own person the universe of diverse shapes and forms, both sentient and insentient, without affecting their unity.

4. An embodied soul is held in bondage by ignorance and imperfect knowledge. Illusion, like the son of a barren woman—non-existing and yet playing havoc—is the cause of human bondage.

5. In supreme knowledge, there does not exist the trinity—the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge.

6. In overcoming Illusion, the individual is greatly helped by the four levels of speech viz. *vaikhari*, *madhyama*, *pasyanti* and *para*.

7. Ultimately it is one's own worthy preceptor (Guru) who brings about one's liberation by destroying ignorance and the ego. There remains, then, no distinction between the preceptor and the disciple.

All these terse facts are beautifully explained by Jananesvara in *Amṛtānubhava*, a work of 807 *ovis*, with the help of similes and metaphors.

The similes are so rooted in Marathi language and culture that it is well nigh impossible to translate them into English. Sri R. K. Bhagwat has really done a wonderful service to all those who do not know Marathi—the Marathi of the 13th century A.D. at that. His translation is faithful and beautiful. The essence of the teachings of Jñānadeva has not been lost in this English book. On the contrary a reader is able to appreciate the poetic beauty of the original composition as well. Sri Bhagwat is an expert in the economy of words. The translation is interspersed with his notes to elucidate some difficult concepts. But these notes do not encumber the original work. They have only added to the comprehensibility of the sublime spiritual thought.

As regards the propriety of writing down his own higher experiences, Srī Jñānadeva says 'What sermon can one offer to Self? And what is one going to lose by keeping quiet? Therefore,

my gross form of speech (*vaikhari*) has assumed silence even in regard to silence. This is like drawing a picture of a fish on the surface of water.' (x. 16-17).

The introduction by the translator is quite elaborate, covering the first 18 pages of the book. It expounds the philosophy briefly and also epitomizes the contents of each chapter. This enables the aspirants to grasp the essence of Jñānadeva's thought, whereafter, he can glide into the text easily.

The translation of *Amṛtānubhava* is followed by the translation of the 65 *ovis* of *Changdeva pasasthi*—a letter written by Jnanadeva to a contemporary ascetic. It also contains an equally important spiritual message.

The get up of the book is beautiful, and the printing is flawless.

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HEAT AND SACRIFICE IN THE VEDAS:
BY UMA MARINA VESCI. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawaharnagar, Delhi 110 007. 1985. Pp. xvii + 339. Rs. 100.

Religion involves offerings made to the deities or to the one God, either in return for the blessings obtained or to ensure grace and assistance. Such offerings are generally raw in kind, albeit in elaborate ritual. In the Vedic cult, however, such offerings are cooked rather than left raw. Cooking of the offerings itself assumes the nature of a ritual. Ritual cooking is especially relevant for the portion reserved for offering to Gods. Burnt offering thus becomes highly symbolic. The heat necessary for ritual cooking has its philosophical, historical and hermeneutic overtones. These are discussed in the book under review.

The author, who was born in Rome and graduated in ancient history and archaeology has been in India since 1963, involving herself in studies on Hinduism, especially in the Vedic context. This book is an evidence of her sympathetic approach, deep insight and commendable erudition. She is impressed by the fact that cooking is essentially a transformation of energy, at the physical as well as psychological levels. And she has set out to discover the philosophical, theological and cosmological messages which lie hidden in cooking as a ritual.

She starts with the assumption that the rite is really and truly a language with its own internal message. She approaches sacrifice as having a structure with certain synthetic rules which are well defined and valid. The compulsive part of the ritual consists in 'the not-to-be-transgressed nature of these rules. The book is an attempt to bring out these ritualistic rules in bold relief, and to provide an insight into these 'strange facts', which are hardly understandable at first.

The author had sketched out the framework of this book in an article in *Bijoragen* (Amsterdam, 1978, 39, pp. 399-423), entitled 'The Role of Heat in Vedic Sacrifice and the Place of Pain in the Act of Creation'. Heat in that article was defined as the source of physical, spiritual and psychic energy becoming apparent. That article dealt with Heat in three sections: Heat as such, Its lack, and Its excess. The book is an elaboration of the first of these sections, the latter two being omitted here.

The book is a great help in understanding the real import of Vedic ritual which unfortunately has become neglected and treated as casuistry by a decadent priestcraft. The loss of ritual awareness is one of the central problems of our times. It is not sufficiently understood that the 'traditional man reconstructs the world in which he lives by means of rituals'. It is an error to think that the ritual appeals to our fancy, or even to our reason: it appeals primarily to our intuition.

The book is an eloquent plea to regard 'the ritual as a fundamental factor for the reconstruction of a world in which the human being can live in peace and fulfil his destiny' (p. xv). It is a welcome addition to the critical and insightful literature on the Vedic religion.

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JALALU'D-DIN RUMI AND HIS
TASAWWUF: BY HARENDRACHANDRA PAUL.
Published by Shobharani Paul, M.I.G. Housing
Estate, 60/67 B.T. Road, Block C/2, Calcutta
700 002. 1985. Pp. xii + 455. Rs. 120.

In a multi-religious country like India, mysticism and comparative studies on religion

are a vital social necessity, not to speak of its importance to scholars and thinkers. The learned author of the book under review has correctly referred to mysticism as 'deification of man', 'a merging of the individual with the universal will', 'an intuitive certainty of contact with the supersensual world'. *Tasawwuf* or Sufism is understood as Islamic mysticism. Jalāluddīn Rūmī is admittedly one of the greatest and most respected Sufi who lived in Iran during A.D. 1207-73. His thoughts on mysticism are spelt out in his writings which comprise 25,000 rhyming couplets in *Mathnavī* and 1,600 *rubāyāts* or quatrains.

Dr. Harendrachandra Paul's book is a learned, fully documented discourse on Rūmī's life and philosophy and its impact on contemporary Islamic mystics. He has referred to the works on the same subject by Arberry and Nicholson and also to Upanisads, Gīta, Quran and Hadith in explaining the thoughts of this poet-philosopher. For Rūmī, the essence of religion is a cosmic feeling, an intuition of oneness with the spirit of the universe, almost like the Indian conception of the unity of Atman and Brahman. Like Bergson, Rūmī affirmed that intuition is a higher kind of intellect. Dr. Paul has examined the universal and spiritual aspects of each religion. Like all great mystics, Rūmī laid stress on the fact that the formalities of each religion may differ but the nature and context of the inner spirit shining in the heart of a devotee of every faith is the same.

Unlike some of the modern interpreters, Dr. Paul has rightly stated that Rūmī has claimed his philosophy in *Mathnavī* as an exposition of the mystical import of the *Quran*. Rūmī's mysticism is based on the doctrine of *tauhid* (Unity of God), which is a fundamental teaching of Islam. But, as a mystic, he emphasized the importance of Love in the universe and in personal realization of God. The author has stated in the words of Rūmī, 'His love is manifest and the Beloved is hidden; the friend is outside, and His splendour is the world'. To Rūmī the state of pure love can only be realized. His pantheistic view of the universe also follows from his selfless concept of Divine love. He said, 'The created beings are, as if, so many waves which rise from the ocean (God), and are again mixed with the ocean. The waves have no origin in themselves; they come from the ocean, they stand on the ocean, and are again mixed with it.'

The book, though illuminating in itself as a dependable exposition of Rūmī's Sufism, would have been more helpful if the distinguishing features of Rūmī's thoughts had been compared with those of other Sufi schools such as Quaderia, Chistia, Suhrawardy, Naqshbandi etc. A subject-index would have been appreciated by scholars. English translations of the poems quoted by the author in this book would have enhanced the usefulness of the book. The book, however, is a comprehensive work on Rūmī's philosophy and is an asset to scholars, religious people and lovers of literature.

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MALAYALAM

SAHITYASANCHARAM: BY SWAMI
SIDDHINATHANANDA. Published by Sri Rama-
krishna Sevashrama, Kallai, Calicut, Kerala,
673 018. 1986. Pp. xii + 355. Rs. 20.

This fascinating book consists of 28 essays on different topics of religious, spiritual, literary and educational importance. Apart from the importance of the topics dealt with, the most notable feature of the present book is their variety. To press maximum amount of thought into minimum of words is a great art. This is exactly what the author has done in this book in which the reader will find the wealth of wisdom of many minds placed on a platter, as it were.

It may be mentioned that the author is a widely travelled pilgrim who has published several books on his pilgrimages. The present book, as its title indicates, is the outcome not of his physical travels, but of his inner travels in the world of thoughts. About this change in his literary effort he says: "The days of frantic hurry are over. What else can one be except a *kutichaka* (a mendicant confined mostly to his hermitage)? But will the deep-rooted tendency vanish overnight? Moreover, the mind's inherent nature is to wander ceaselessly. Therefore, the journey hereafter will be within the realm of the

mind only. And this book is the tangible effect of these occasional mental flights'. (P. ix).

Every article in this book conveys something new and fresh. The author, apart from being the repository of vast erudition, is endowed with the gift of intuitive thinking and his mature wisdom touches brilliance when he says: 'The old see the front and the back, but the glance of the young is cast upon the front only, the back being totally ignored'. (P. 15). 'The path of action finds its culmination in the path of knowledge and this thought has been the mother of all virtues insofar as they relate to Bharat' (P. 18).

While the Greek root *muo* has been traced as the basis of 'mystery' and interpreted as an equivalent term for the Sanskrit root *man* (to think) (p. 62), an attempt has been made to show *sahitya* as the *sahitabhava* (the state of inseparability) through a skilful interpretation of the famous mantra in the *Mundaka Upanishad* describing 'Two birds of beautiful plumage' (p. 349). Here the boldness of speculation of the author is quite obvious for the imagination of ordinary literateurs seldom turns towards spiritual heights. Here could be seen again glimpses of the unity of all religions when the author without any reservation goes to describe at length the perfection of Lord Buddha (p. 25), the Divinity of Lord Christ (p. 48), the spiritual perception of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharshi (pp. 65-72), the loftiness of the thought of Aquinas (p. 184), the vision of Guru Nanak (p. 208) and the social impact of the teachings of Sri Narayana Guru (p. 262). Swami Siddhinathananda can well claim the honour of being a true representative of the great religious movement set in motion by Sri Ramakrishna with its ideals as broad as the sky, as vast as the ocean.

All told, this book is a good example of how literary talents can be harnessed for the promotion of spirituality and how creative writing could be lifted to higher levels and made spiritually rewarding.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

REPORT OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION BELUR MATH, FOR 1985-86

Issued by the General Secretary

Ramakrishna Mission, on 28 December 1986

The 77th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at the Belur Math premises on Sunday the 28th December 1986, at 3.30 p.m. Swami Gambhirananda, President of the Ramakrishna Mission was the Chairman of the proceedings. A synopsis of the Governing Body's report for 1985-86, placed before the meeting, is given below.

In the period under report, the Mission spent a sum of Rs. 14,00,765/- under the head 'Relief and Rehabilitation' towards providing succour to the hapless victims of various calamities like flood, cyclone etc. Apart from this, relief articles worth Rs. 11,08,052/- were received as gift from philanthropic minded public and distributed amongst the distressed and needy.

The Ramakrishna Math also conducted relief programmes, involving an expenditure of Rs. 3,60,486.

During the year Pallimangal programmes (Integrated Rural Development) involving Agro-economic service, cottage industry, pisciculture, health and hygiene, education work, etc. were implemented by quite a few branches of both the Mission and the Math involving substantial outlay of funds. The Headquarters alone spent Rs. 7,74,943/- under these programmes.

Amidst the important developments during the year, the inauguration of 'Ramakrishna Darshan' a museum on the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna and 'Samaj Sevak Sikshana-mandira' an institution for training youths in rural development work, at Saradapith, Belur, deserve special mention. The centre at Raipur has undertaken tribal welfare work on a massive scale in the Abujmahar area of Bastar District, Madhya Pradesh. The project envisages providing facilities of free education, medical treatment, vocational training etc.

A branch of the Mission was started at Agartala. Mobile medical services were

commenced by our Itanagar and Rajahmundry centres.

The academic results of the educational institutions were brilliant as usual with our students securing the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 15th, 16th, and 20th positions in the Madhyamik Examination 1985 and the 3rd, 4th, 9th, and 13th positions in the Higher Secondary Examination 1985, in West Bengal.

Significant developments during the same period in the Ramakrishna Math were the consecration of a marble image of Sri Ramakrishna at Contai and the inauguration of a 5,000 litre solar water system at Rajkot.

The Mission did commendable medical work through its 8 hospitals, 66 dispensaries and 15 mobile units. Rural people and tribal folk were the major beneficiaries of 32 dispensaries and all the mobile units. In all 42,87,388 patients were rendered medical service.

The Math served 7,41,121 patients through its 5 hospitals, 17 dispensaries and 4 mobile units. Out of these, 3 hospitals, 8 dispensaries and 3 mobile units were located in rural and tribal areas which were much lacking in basic medical facilities.

In 1985-86 the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math lived up to their reputation in the field of education. The trend of ever-increasing demand for admission was clearly evident. The educational institutions of the Mission numbering 966 had on their rolls 1,18,999 students while the Ramakrishna Math had a students' strength of 9,676 in its 92 educational institutions. Out of these, 863 institutions, including 428 non-formal education centres, were located in rural and tribal areas.

National Youth Day was celebrated by most of our centres, in an enthusiastic and solemn manner. The celebrations culminated in a grand youth convention held at Belur Math in which there were about 11,000 participants.

The Math and Mission centres in other countries were engaged in educational, medical, cultural and spiritual activities of various types.

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, at the end of the year the Mission and Math had 75 and 70 branches respectively, in India and a few other countries.